

# A HAND-BOOK OF CONGREGATIONALISM

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REV. HENRY MARTYN DEXTER D.D.

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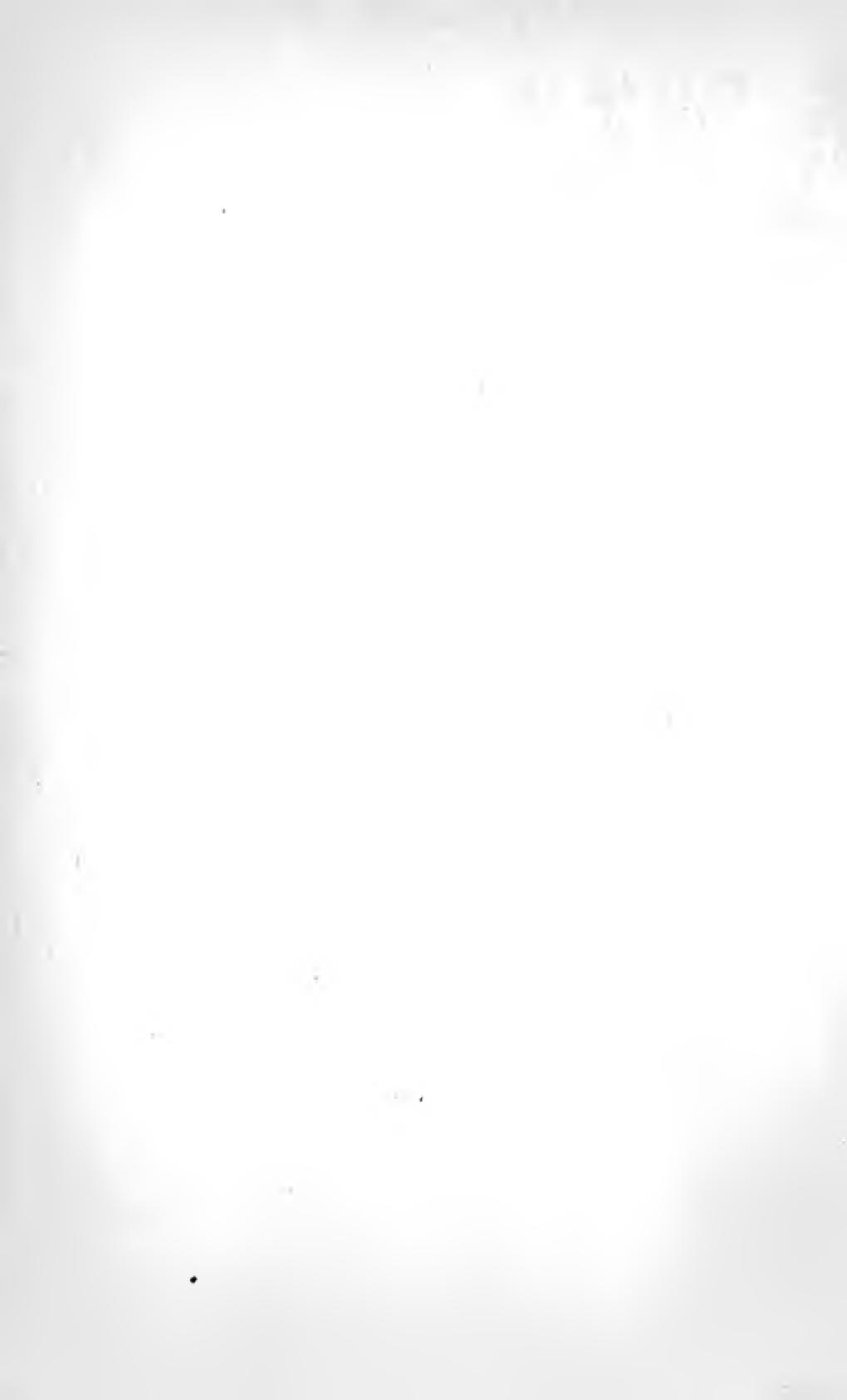
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A HAN-D-BOOK  
OF  
CONGREGATIONALISM,

BY  
HENRY MARTYN DEXTER.

*SECOND THOUSAND.*

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TO  
THE SETTLED PASTORS AND TEACHERS

OF THE

Congregational Churches of the United States:

MORE ESPECIALLY

TO THOSE HONORED OF GOD IN BEING CALLED TO APPROVE  
THEMSELVES AS HIS MINISTERS BY ENDURING

HARDNESS IN MUCH PATIENCE,

—AS POOR, YET MAKING MANY RICH—

THIS LITTLE BOOK,

DESIGNED IN SOME THINGS TO LIGHTEN THEIR LABOR,

Is Affectionately and Reverently Dedicated.

As for our selves, wee protest  
with simple harts in the pres-  
ence of God, and his holy  
Angelles, vnto al men, that  
wee doo not wittingly and  
willingly mātaine anie one  
error against the word of truth  
(though wee doubt not but  
as all other men wee are

liable to error, whiche our God wee trust will in mercy forgiue  
vnto vs) but hold the grounds of Christian Religion with all  
Gods antient Churches . . . and with all faythfull people at  
this day. . . . Let him that readeth consider and the Lord  
gyue him vnderstanding in all. Weigh all things vprightly  
in the ballance of the Sanctuarie, and judg righteous iudg-  
ment. Bee not offended at the simplicitie of the Gosspell,  
neyther hold the fayth of our glorious Lord Iesus Christ,  
in respect of mens persons. Gods cause shall stand when

al that handle yt amisse  
shall fall before yt. Wee  
offer heere our fayth to the  
view and tryall of all men.  
Try all things and keep  
that whiche is good: and ys  
thou shalt reape anie frute  
by these our labors (gentel  
Reader) gyue God the glory.

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FOR two reasons, mainly, I have written this little *Hand-Book*. One, that, in nearly thirty years of connection with a Congregational newspaper, through contact with hundreds of committees, and the reading of thousands of letters, I have found that a popular and as I judge growing need and demand exist for some cheap and compact manual, adapted both to easy circulation and comprehension; and which may especially offer to an unaccustomed population some brief yet clear idea of our Congregational ways, with the reason that underlies them. The other, that since publishing fifteen years ago a treatise which, in spite of its disadvantages of size and cost, has gained gratifying circulation now through five editions, I have learned much of which I was ignorant when it was written, and so am naturally anxious to revise its unconscious inaccuracies, by bringing, in another form, my statements into better accord with what I now believe to be the truth. I have taken special pains to cite every passage in the New Testament which refers to polity, and also to place indirectly in my readers' hands the means of resolving as many as possible of those continually emerging practical Congregational questions, the just solution of which may not instantly suggest itself to minds not specially accustomed to our fundamental principles and usual methods of thought.

Without doubt some person will allege this as a new endeavor to "control" the churches. Such an allegation will be as true—and as false—as previous intimations of the same sort have been. He who waits to be insured that his good will not be evil spoken of before doing any, will earn neither thanks for to-day, nor remembrance from to-morrow.

H. M. D.

*Editorial Rooms of THE CONGREGATIONALIST,  
Corner Beacon and Somerset Streets, Boston,  
1 September, 1880.*

## CHAPTER I.

### THE HISTORY OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

P 1 SPEAK here solely of its history since the Reformation, inasmuch as the discussion of that original Congregationalism which is taught and exemplified in the references of the New Testament to the subject of polity, and which characterized the Apostolic churches, can be treated more naturally under a subsequent head in the examination of those references themselves.

P 2 "The immediate result of that transfer of the headship of the Established Church of England from Pope Clement VII. to King Henry VIII., which it is common to call the Reformation, was Episcopacy.<sup>(2)</sup> A secondary result was the Presbyterianism which those who were exiled for conscience' sake during the brief subsequent reign of the bloody Mary were taught by the disciples of Calvin at Geneva, Frankfort, and elsewhere, and brought back with them on their return ; of which Thomas Cartwright<sup>1570</sup> was the most illustrious champion. The spiritual needs of England remained so serious under Elizabeth as to lead the godly who longed for a more thorough and purer reformation to cast about for some greater relief than had yet been gained ; and the majority of these — who soon came to be, not unnaturally, called Puritans — looked toward Cartwright and the new discipline which he advocated, as best offering

to supply a demand which every month seemed to them to render more pressing. But this Genevan plan contemplated a State Church still. It proposed indiscriminately, by their baptism, to receive all the baptized to its fellowship. And it waited for the Queen to move as its leader and head—which, to some whose hearts burned within them, seemed to threaten a weary waiting for a doubtful blessing; yet while the little light which they saw in this direction was scarcely more than darkness, they saw none at all else-wise.

P 3  
SRB

Such being the condition of affairs, in the year 1568, or thereabouts, there went up to Cambridge—where the Puritan influence then especially centered—a young man named Robert Browne, of a good family in Rutlandshire, to become a scholar of Corpus Christi (or Benet) College. Leaving Cambridge after a few terms of study, he taught school for three years, apparently at Southwark; but the plague of 1578 broke up his school, and he went home. On the subsidence of the pest he returned to Cambridge for further research and training, and soon became a member of the family of Rev. Richard Greenham, an eminently devout Puritan minister resident in the near vicinity, and studied theology with him. Mr. Greenham encouraged him to preach, and he did so with so much acceptance as soon to be pressed to accept one of the Cambridge pulpits. After considerable anxious thought he declined the invitation, on the ground that he could not in conscience ask, or receive, ordination from the Bishops. He passed through, at this time, a mental conflict which for a season seems to have broken down his not robust bodily health. In his own language:

...he had no rest what he might do for the name and kingdom of God: he often complained of these evill daies and with manie tears sought where to find the righteous which glorified God, with whom he might live, and rejoice together that they put away abominations."

After his recovery from severe illness and regaining of strength, while beseeching the Lord "to show him more comfort of His kingdom and church than he saw in Cambridge," it came to his ears that there were believers in Norfolk who were "verie forward" in that good work of spiritual reform for which his soul longed, and he thought it his duty to "take his voyage to them." He accordingly went to Norwich, where, spending some months in prayer, the study of the Bible, and meditation in the open fields, he came, at last, into the conviction that the only way to untie the knot was to cut it, and that such persons as desired to walk with God and with each other without waiting for prince or people, should separate themselves from the world and from all who walk disorderly, and join themselves together into local companies, each one of which — being rightly confederate of true believers — would be a true church of Christ. And so soon as his mind found rest in this position, he proceeded to labor with others, until — at some time in 1580, as it would seem — he, with a few associates of a kindred spirit, at Norwich formed by mutual covenant what I believe to have been the first Congregational church since the last of those founded in the days of the Apostles yielded up its life under the superincumbent weight of an intolerable hierarchy.

¶ 4 Browne thoroughly elaborated his new system. He

(1)

believed that all church power resides in Christ, its rightful absolute monarch. Democracy was not a thought of his time, and he was no democrat. Yet as he held that Christ reveals His will to, and by, each of His faithful ones—ruling through each equally as His vicegerent—in point of practical working his absolute monarchy became indistinguishable from a pure democracy.<sup>(2)</sup> The people governed as vicegerents of Christ ; yet still the people governed.<sup>(3)</sup> A mutual covenant was the fundamental basis on which all rested.

(4) The outward signs and seals were baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>(6)</sup> Every such local church, while self-complete and under Christ self-governed, was bound in equal sisterhood to every other. It should give to and receive from them not only sympathy but help as need might require. Such sympathy and help, on occasion, should manifest themselves in Councils or Synods, “for deciding or redressing of matters which can not well be otherwise taken up.”<sup>(6)</sup> One further provision there was, whose prominence brought disaster to the enterprise, and seems to have reacted to modify Congregationalism for two hundred years. Since the great object of the church is to glorify God and serve Christ in the spiritual perfectness of its own believers, Browne held that it was one duty of the church to watch over its members with a view to insure their becoming perfect as our Father which is in Heaven is perfect ; and he carried this to that degree that they “particularly agreed ” to hold frequent meetings for mutual criticism, and for the correction of errors and reform of abuses in each other.

The theory of that day made it the imperious duty

of the State to require and seek to secure uniformity in Worke religion ; through persecution, if need were. By consequence Browne and his associates were persecuted. He himself testified that he endured the rigors of two-and-thirty prisons, in some of which he could not see his hand at noon-day. Such obstacles stood in the way of all proper development of associate life that the little church soon emigrated in a body to Middelberg, in Zealand, where by the tolerance of the magistracy they were permitted to work in their own manner. There all went well for a time. Browne wrote several treatises stating and advocating with great vigor of language, and much force of thought, his new views. But his people were poor, and sustenance was not easy to be earned, while narrow circumstances chilled their enthusiasm, and the regular seasons of mutual criticism degenerated into occasions of surmise, scolding and recrimination ; until the meagerly cultured body, unfit at once to bear responsibilities for which their training had been so inadequate, went to pieces in jealous and angry squads. Browne resigned his pastorate, and in the early winter of 1583, with a handful of followers, returned to England by way of Scotland, and the brief bright light went out in the gloom of what seemed absolute failure. To make bad matters as much worse as possible, Browne himself soon after returned nominally to the Establishment, accepting from his noble kinsman, Lord Burghley, the living of Achurch-cum-Thorpe ; and all which can save the remaining forty years of his life from condemnation, and rescue his earlier career from the ignominy of presumed hypocrisy, or admitted apostasy, is the conviction — for which

there are many reasonable grounds of hope—that, never having enjoyed vigorous health, he became so dis-eased in mind as that, while tolerated under strong protection as the incumbent of an insignificant parish which a century later contained only eighteen families, he was practically to a degree insane, and sometimes wholly irresponsible. His writings had been early sent over for circulation in England, and the fact that when Copping and Thacker were hanged at Bury St. Edmonds in 1583 for circulating them, “so many of the books as could be found, were burned” in connection with the execution, seems to indicate a conviction on the part of the authorities that some elements of popular influence were in them.

P5 The next successors of Browne before the English people as advocates of Separatism—coming into notice five or six years after the Middelberg collapse—were Henry Barrowe and John Greenwood. How much Browne’s books had to do with shaping their thoughts, we may never know; but they certainly adopted his system in the main, so far as the duty of Separation, the right of forming local churches by covenant, and other germane features were concerned. On the other hand they seem to have assumed that the failure of Browne’s endeavor was due to its practical democracy, to avoid which they proposed to have the church governed by a few of its cultivated members. Their system became thus a compromise between—or rather perhaps an amalgamation of—Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. It was Congregational in that it advocated the local church confederate by covenant, with pastor, teacher, and officers chosen by itself; inde-

pendent of all outward control, yet bound in the bonds of common sisterhood to all similar bodies. It was Presbyterian in that it entrusted the government of each local church to the session of ruling elders, which it was the first duty of the membership to choose, and the second, ever after to obey in the Lord. As early as 1589 there seems to have existed a rudimentary organization of the disciples of this phase of Separatism—which is Barrowism—in London; but, such and so many were the interruptions of persecution, that it does not appear to have been able to perfect that organization until the early autumn of 1592, when Francis Johnson was chosen pastor, John Greenwood teacher, Daniel Studley and George Knyveton, elders, and Nicholas Lee and Christopher Bowman, deacons. About a year later the unimprisoned portion of the church made its way to Holland, where it remained for four years without pastor; and for a considerable period, until Henry Ainsworth had become its teacher, without the sacraments. Not until near the end of the summer of 1597 were the pastor and elders, with that portion of the company which had been detained in the Gatehouse, the Clink, the Fleet, and Newgate, or banished ineffectually to Newfoundland, able to join their brethren, so that the little church could commence together, and in fairly good order, its Amsterdam life of troubles.

The interesting and instructive history of its fortunes and misfortunes there cannot here be detailed. Nor is it essential to the purpose of the present sketch that attention be called to it, further than to develop the fact that in the division and subdivision which the

church suffered ; and in its relations to the successive companies on the one hand of the able, devout, but erratic John Smyth, and on the other to that officered by John Robinson and William Brewster ; and not less in those discussions in which Johnson, Ainsworth, Clyfton, and Robinson bore a distinguished part ; the ill working of a Presbyterian heart within a Congregational body became conspicuously manifest. Neither the High-Church Barrowism of Johnson, nor the Low-Church Barrowism of Ainsworth, nor the Broad-Church Barrowism of Robinson, proved equal to any permanently satisfactory solution of the problem in what manner the radical inconsistency involved in a body constituted so as to be controlled under Christ by its members, and at the same time, also and especially, to be controlled under Christ by its elders, could be solved. Robinson came nearest to a solution by reducing the inconsistency to the minimum of never having but one elder, never filling his place after the public occasions led him to America, and never undertaking any other control than that which inheres in intelligence and moral influence.

*MS. B. 1. 1. v. 15, p. 88* Such being the ideas dominant in Leyden, it was a matter of course that the Leyden-Plymouth company—the more that they were obliged to wait nearly ten years in the wilderness before they had a pastor—should develop their Barrowistic theory into a practice that was little more than Brownism itself. When the Dorchester, Salem, and Massachusetts companies came over, their Nonconformity was of the most chaotic description—individuals indeed appearing to imagine that a way might be found in which they could retain

some sort of unobjectionable connection with the Church of England still. But by the time when Mr. Cotton arrived, influences had begun to work at home which were preparing the way for the strange overturn which was to give the mother-country for a short time a Presbyterian Establishment, and bring on the Long Parliament.

About 1616 Henry Jacob returned to London from a varied experience on the Continent, and organized the first Congregational church in England which has left any traceable direct descent to the present time. It was naturally a Barrowistic body. So were those which grew up by its side, whose outnumbered pastors gave the Presbyterians so hard a fight in the Westminster Assembly.

On this side of the sea, Cotton, Davenport, and Hooker shared the bitter old misconception and prejudice which had followed poor Browne in his renegade retirement; knew what his system was—his books having disappeared from public knowledge altogether—only from the misrepresentations of his enemies; and—led on in large part by too close an interpretation of a few passages like Romans xii: 6–8; 1 Cor. xii: 28; 1 Tim. v: 17, etc.—they established Barrowism as the type of New England Congregationalism. As such it went into the Cambridge Platform, where it especially blossoms in the eleventh section of the tenth chapter, as follows:

"From the Premises, namely, That *the ordinary power of Government* belonging *only* to the Elders, *power of priviledg* remaineth with the brotherhood . . . it followeth, that in an organick Church, and *right administration*, all Church acts proceed after the manner

of a mixt administration, so as no Church act can be consummated, or perfected, without the consent of both."

What this "power of privilege" amounted to is made clear by the eighth section of the same chapter, where we read that when the elders have called the church together upon any weighty occasion:

"the members so called may not without just cause [the Elders being judges] refuse to come; nor when they are come, depart before they are dismissed; nor speak in the Church before they have leave from the Elders; nor continue so doing when they [the Elders] require silence; nor may they oppose nor contradict the judgment or *sentence* of the Elders without [what those Elders concede to be] sufficient and weighty cause; because such practices are manifestly contrary unto order and government, and in-lets of disturbance, and tend to confusion."

Beautiful in theory as Barrowe thought this must be in the eye of every truly good man, and well-balanced as John Cotton conceived it ought to prove in practice, New England never really took to it. It may be doubtful if a single church here ever fully furnished itself with elders according to Barrowe's ideal; and it proved in practice excessively difficult to obtain fit men to serve in an office at once so exacting, so unsatisfying, and so liable to be unpopular. The pastors, however, for a long time proved equal to the emergency, and made up in quality of assumption for quantity of elder-ship. In many cases, after ruling elders had altogether ceased to be attempted to be chosen, the pastor assumed to himself solely the function constitutionally assigned to a session of which theoretically he was but a single member, and, in virtue of the eleventh section above cited, claimed and exercised the right to veto all

church action which displeased him ; on the ground that "no church act can be consummated, or perfected, without the consent of *both*."

I need not suggest that such a condition of affairs was not a wholesome one for religion here. It was no strange thing that unrest followed. It would be too long a story for this page how God raised up John Wise of Ipswich, and, two generations later, Nathaniel Emmons of Franklin, by whose masterful logic, and powerful influence, the churches were carried back to New Testament times, and Congregationalism—although these men scarcely knew the precise quality, or the full value, of that which they were doing—once more consistently planted upon the foundations which Robert Browne had elaborated for it in Norwich three hundred years ago. There was a difference in philosophy; none at all in the result. The world had been drifting toward democracy. And Wise and Emmons both demonstrated, with irresistible clearness and force, that democracy is not only a sound, but the best, government, whether for Church or State. So that the votes which in Robert Browne's little church at Middleberg its members gave not in their own right, but as vicegerents of Christ, the members of our American churches now give, under some solemn sense of fealty to the Master indeed, and with supreme desire to please Him, yet humbly as of their own right under Him, as being intelligent and responsible members of a spiritual commonwealth, each one of whom must give account before God for the use of the talents and gifts with which he has been endowed.

In England, two hundred years ago, the Westminster

and Savoy Assemblies elaborated statements of the theology and the polity of the Congregational—or, as it has there been more common to call them, the Independent—churches; while for nearly half a century the Congregational Union of England and Wales, which holds its annual meeting in the month of May in London, and an autumnal meeting in some other city or town of England and Wales, has been steadily doing a good work of unification and consolidation which yet has in no way invaded, or impaired, the liberties of the churches.

In this country a General Synod was resorted to as early as in 1637, for the counteraction of the speculative errors of John Wheelwright and Mistress Anne Hutchinson. A second, which convened in 1646 and adjourned to 1648, indorsed the then recent doctrinal statements of the Westminster Assembly in the Fatherland, and set forth the Cambridge Platform as formulating accurately the Congregational polity as by it understood. Although a most important Synod was held in Massachusetts in 1662 upon the question who are proper subjects of baptism, which resulted in the disastrous recommendation of the half-way covenant; another in 1679–80 which condemned certain evils on account of which it was feared the Lord was scourging the land; and still another at Saybrook, in Connecticut, in 1708, which led to the adoption by the majority of the churches of that State of Consociationism and the Saybrook Platform; no third General Synod was gathered from the Congregational churches of all the land until the “Albany Convention” of 1852, which did important work in setting in motion agencies for the

assistance of feeble Congregational churches at the West, and promoted some important readjustment of certain old arrangements between Congregationalists and Presbyterians which had been found to work to the disadvantage of the former. After the War of the Rebellion, and the new aspects of the South thence resulting, a General Council was held at Boston in 1865, whose results were most important in evoking and wisely directing the common benevolence, in bringing pastors and churches West and East to a better, more confiding, and more coöperative mutual acquaintance, and, in general, in consolidating and stimulating our denominational growth and usefulness. On the 17th November, 1871, through the agency of a fifth General Convention, the Triennial National Council was organized at Oberlin, Ohio, on the basis of one delegate for every ten churches, and one for a fraction of ten greater than one-half; together with one delegate from each State organization of churches, and one for each ten thousand communicants in their fellowship, with one also for a major fraction thereof—as nearly equally divided between ministers and laymen as may be. The second session of this Council was held at New Haven, Connecticut, September 30—October 4, 1874; the third at Detroit, Michigan, October 17—21, 1877; and the fourth is to meet at St. Louis, Missouri, on the 11th November, 1880.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE POLITY OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

✓  HE claim of Congregationalism is that it is the polity of the New Testament ; a claim founded upon the conviction that it is impossible with a clear and candid mind to examine Gospels, Acts, and Epistles, studying critically every passage between "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ" of Matthew, and the last "Amen" of the Apocalypse, which refers, however remotely, to church government, without reaching such a conclusion.

But three systems of polity — the democracy of Congregationalism, the aristocracy of Presbyterianism, and the monarchy of Episcopacy, and of the Greek and Romish churches — are possible. They may be inconsistently combined, as we have seen the first two to have been amalgamated in Barrowism ; but such hybridity is unfertile and therefore temporary. Moreover, the three are scarcely sufficiently alike, either in principles or processes, to be easily confounded with each other. So that, in so far as the New Testament refers at all to that subject, either in the way of implication while it describes early church methods which enter into its narrative, or in the way of precept, there would seem to be no need of serious doubt as to which of the three it chronicles and favors.

The briefest possible examination of every passage

in the New Testament which with directness touches the subject, is now proposed, in the view of eliciting the amplitude and the conclusiveness of the argument for Congregationalism therein contained. In fairness, before entering upon such an examination, I may, however, call attention to the fact well known to scholars, that the merely English reader of King James's version suffers occasional disadvantage in such a study, for the reason that its translators acted under Episcopal bias, and in some passages modified earlier and more exact versions in its interest.<sup>1</sup>

#### SECTION I. CONGREGATIONALISM IN THE GOSPELS.

Here one further preliminary remark appears essential — to the effect that it seems to have been our Lord's plan to leave the work of elaboration to the apostles, under the constant superintendence of the Holy Spirit. We easily see that there was a necessity that this be

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<sup>1</sup> The translation by them of the word *πάσχα* [*passover*] by "Easter" [Acts xii: 4]; of the word *ἐπισκοπῆν* [*office*] by "bishoprick" [Acts i: 20]; of the word *ἐπισκόπους* by "bishop" in several passages of the Epistles, when they had rendered it simply "overseers" in Acts xx: 28; of as many as seven different Greek words [*ἱερατεῖον*, 1 Cor. vii: 17; *καθίστημι*, Tit. i: 5, Heb. viii: 3; *κρίνω*, Acts xvi: 4; *ποιέω*, Mark iii: 14; *τάσσω*, Rom. xiii: 1; *τίθημι*, 1 Tim. ii: 7; and *χειροτονέω*, Acts xiv: 23], neither one of which properly signifies what general readers naturally understand by the term, by the phrase "ordain," — are examples of what is here meant. So Acts xiv: 23 retained in the English versions, until the hand of Episcopal authority struck it out, the recognition of the action of the membership of the churches in the choice of their elders. Tyndale [1534] reads, "And when they had ordained them elders *by eleccion* in every congregacion." Cranmer [1539] reads, "And whan they had ordened them Elders *by eleccion* in every congregacion." The Genevan [1557], "And when they had ordeined them Elders *by election* in every Churche." The authorized version [1611] struck out this reference to the people, and made the act that of the apostles alone, etc.

so in the vitalest matters of theology. Jesus planted the seeds ; they ripened the fruit. It was necessary for Him to die before the great central doctrine of the Atonement could be seen by them in its true aspect, as the propitiation for their sins, and not for theirs only, but also for the sins of the whole world ; and before those other doctrines which grow out of it and depend upon it could assume their logical place, and take on their relative force. So also in the matter of the church and of church-life, Christ contented Himself with making a few suggestions—commands in spirit though scarcely in form—and laying down a general principle, with a single rule, leaving it for the apostles to carry them out to their necessary conclusions, while He should guide them in the work of laying church foundations, when the time came for it, by His pledged supervision. As, moreover, the matter of church form must necessarily be among those things reached, if reached at all, only in the closing stages of His career, we ought to expect to find very few, if any, references to it in the four Gospels.

It so happens that the first word which we come to in the harmonized New Testament—I follow mainly Dr. Robinson's familiar manual—which seems to have any flavor of polity about it, is one [Mark iii: 14] which illustrates the criticism already made upon King James's translators as sometimes, for substance, corrupting the text in the interest of Episcopacy. They tell us that Jesus “*ordained* twelve, that they should be with him ;” and so forth. This, if it were correct, would not mean much, but it would certainly sound about as, Episcopally, it ought to sound. The Greek

word is *ποιέω* [*poieō*]. This is employed four or five hundred times in the New Testament, and always in the sense of either "to make" or "to do," — as it is used to imply action as being completed or continued. In no other instance does our common version translate it "ordain." It means here simply "to make to become;" that is, to *appoint*. Wiclid [A.D. 1380] renders it, "And he made that there weren twelue with hym." The Genevan version [A.D. 1557] gives it, "And he appoynted twelue, that they should be with hym." Even the Romanist Rheims version [A.D. 1582] has it, "And he made that tvvelue should be vwith him." It is curious to notice, also, in this connection, how the authors of the common version elsewhere strained another verb in the same direction. They represent Christ [John xv: 16] as saying to the twelve, "I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit," and so forth. The Greek word here is *τίθημι* [*tithēmi*], which means "to set," "to put," and so also "to put to some certain use," and hence "to appoint." It is used ninety-six times in the New Testament, and has everywhere been rendered in one of those senses, or in one directly secondary to them, except here, and in 1 Tim. ii: 7, in both of which they have translated it "ordained;" and this although in 2 Tim. i: 11, precisely the same Greek words they have made to read, "Whereunto I am *appointed* a preacher."<sup>1</sup>

There is one class of utterances in the Evangelists from the lips of our Saviour, which inculcates very strongly the general principle of the equal brotherhood

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<sup>1</sup> Wiclid [1380] renders both: "in whiche I am sette a prehour."

of believers. This class is represented by such passages as Matt. xviii: 1-14, Mark ix: 33-50, Luke ix: 46-50, where the question who should be greatest was discussed by the disciples, and answered by our Lord's putting a little child in the midst of them, and saying, "He that is least among you all, the same shall be great;" by such as Matt. xx: 1-16, which declares that even those who come in at the eleventh hour shall receive equal wages, without wrong to those who have borne the heat and burden of the day; by those like Matt. xx: 20-28, Mark x: 35-45, which reply to the request of the mother of Zebedee's children, by teaching that the true primacy is that of doing most, rather than of ruling most, or having most; those which, like Matt. xxiii: 1-12, rebuke the assumptions of the Pharisees, and the aristocracy of their spirit; and John xiii: 1-20, which pictures the Lord as washing the disciples' feet to teach them humility and fraternity.

It is not, of course, pretended that there is here any direct development of distinctively Congregational teaching; but only that all points that way; is more harmonious with it than with its opposites; and is what would be most naturally to be expected if our Lord had that system in mind, as that into which His Spirit should eventually guide believers. I certainly do maintain that when Jesus said to His disciples: "The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them; but *it shall not be so among you,*" etc.; and when He commanded them: "Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, *and all ye are brethren;* neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even

Christ," etc., He laid down a theory of social and church life which it is next to impossible to realize, except through the Congregational way.

We now reach the one law which our Saviour did enact on this subject ; which, I submit, cannot be kept, in perfect good faith, by any other system of church order than our own. This, found in Matt. xviii : 15-18, is the permanent statute of church discipline :

"Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone ; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church ; but, if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

Here Congregationalists insist that the telling to the church (1) cannot be done under the Romanist or Episcopal system, because neither the Pope, nor the College of Cardinals, nor any Archbishop or Bench of Bishops, nor General Convention, can be "the church" in the sense demanded here, while under those systems the local congregation, which is the only one to whom the telling can be done, is utterly without power to act with regard to it ; nor (2) can it be done under the Methodist system, for a like reason ; nor (3) under the Presbyterian system, since their "judicatory" comes in between the individual and the church, and makes it literally impossible for him to obey Christ's command. "The church" [*ἐκκλησία*—*ekklēsia*] here means the local body of believers with which the party is connected. It cannot mean anything else. Even Alford, who was

Dean of a High Church, was constrained to testify here :

"That *ekklēsia* cannot mean the church, as represented by her rulers, appears by verses 19, 20, where *any* collection of believers is gifted with the power of deciding such cases."

And he is honest enough to add :

"Nothing could be further from the spirit of our Lord's command than proceedings in what are oddly enough called 'ecclesiastical courts.' "

And Lange says :

"The term *ekklēsia* must always be understood as referring to the Christian church, or to the meeting of believers, whether it be large or small. . . . Roman-Catholic interpreters are entirely in error in explaining the passage, 'Tell it to the bishops.' "

I am well aware of the suggestion which has been made that, inasmuch as no church was in existence when our Lord uttered these words, He must have referred to the — not specially democratic — synagogue. But this ignores the fact that Christ was speaking for the future, when churches should exist.

That this is the true exposition of the word "church" here becomes more clear and irresistible when we reflect that the very object of friendly labor with the offender by the mass of his neighbor believers, as supplementing the work of the "one or two more," and tenderly aiming to quicken and guide his conscience ; to persuade him that his accusation is no mere misjudgment on the part of a little knot of interested or prejudiced persons, but does indeed deserve his gravest reconsideration, and call for his deepest penitence ; must necessarily become impaired, if not be altogether

thwarted, by the substitution of anything resembling the process of a series of appellant tribunals with a remote and distant judgment upon his case.

Clearly, then, by enacting, as the permanent law of discipline for offenses among His followers, one which can be thoroughly and loyally carried out by the Congregational system, and cannot be so applied by any other, our Saviour did for substance ordain the democratic as the true polity for His church.

It remains, under this part of our subject, only to notice the fact that the idea of the essential fashion of the future Christian church having been thus practically decreed by Christ — as we have seen that it had already been hinted in spirit by Him — His subsequent important utterances conformed themselves to the same conception. This was especially the fact in [John xvii: 1-26] His last prayer for His followers ; in [Matt. xxvi: 26-29 ; Mark xiv: 22-25 ; Luke xxii: 19, 20] His formula of institution for the Lord's Supper ; and [Matt. xxviii: 18-20 ; Mark xvi: 15, 16 ; Luke xxiv: 36-49 ; John xx: 21-23] His last command. With genuine and profound respect for the various excellences of our sister denominations, I do yet most earnestly believe, and most respectfully urge, that no polity so fully as ours is able to accord with and promote the spirit of that divine and loving oneness and brotherhood for which the Saviour prayed ; while His last command, addressed, not to any hierarch or bench of bishops, but to the company of His followers, as a fraternity of equal individuals, who are commanded to "go preach," befits our system better than any other ; and our churches are the only ones which are able with

verbal accuracy exactly to copy, in the Eucharist, the words and deeds of its first institution, as Inspiration has preserved them "for our learning."

One utterance of our Lord only, of a seeming contrary to all these, and which I have reserved until others have been examined, remains to be considered. It is that [Matt. xvi: 18] in which Christ says to Simon, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church," etc. At first glance, this does look as if Peter were appointed to some special foundation work for the church above his brethren, and offers some slight color to the Romish claim of the primacy of this apostle, continued—as they allege—by transfer to the Popes of Rome. It is an obscure text, and has been very variously interpreted. Some, like Augustine, Jerome, and others, have referred the "rock" to Christ Himself; but this seems forced. Some, like the majority of the Fathers, with Huss and Luther, have referred it to Peter's confession of faith in Christ's Messiahship; but it may be doubted if this be warranted by the facts of the case. Some, like Origen, have applied it to Peter as the representative of believers in general; but this appears labored and unsatisfactory. Lange explains the expression as generalizing, so to speak, the individual Peter into what might be called the *petrine* characteristic of the church; viz., faithfulness of confession, as first distinctly exhibited by Peter; but this is open to the objection of being wire-drawn and fanciful. It remains simply and naturally to understand it as spoken of Peter himself in his own proper person, but not, in the Popish sense of Baronius and Bellarmine, as investing him with any

' primacy ; nor, with some Romanists, and many Protestants, like Bengel and Crusius, of any specialty in Peter's work as an apostle ; but in a direct and practical significance : "Thou art Peter [*a rock*] ; and upon this rock-quality—this boldness and firmness of character, this solid fitness for service in the difficult work of winning men to the gospel—I will build my church." And this interpretation, while it satisfies the exigencies of the sense, seems to be borne out by the fact that Peter was first to preach Christ to both Jews [Acts ii: 14] and [Acts x: 34] Gentiles.

Reasonably considered, then, this passage in no sense contradicts, or modifies, those teachings of fraternal equality among His followers, which Christ had before solemnly announced.

So far, then, as the Gospels are concerned, it becomes clear that, as Jesus was the visible and only head of His church so long as He remained on earth, and besides Him there was no superiority and no ruling, but all were brethren, equal in rights, however unequal in their work or their renown ; so it was His theory and purpose in regard to the subsequent development of His church for all the ages, Himself to remain, though ascended, its invisible yet real and only head, its membership standing permanently on the same broad platform of essential equality and brotherhood, and its offices being offices of service and not of control.

## SECTION II. CONGREGATIONALISM IN THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

Such being the hints and foregleams of church government which the Gospels contain, and such the fun-

damental constitutional law by Christ laid down to control all future development; together suggesting that from the beginning He had the democratic polity in mind, and the intent to prepare the way for its practical establishment so soon after His crucifixion and ascension as the fullness of time for that work should come; the question becomes both most interesting and most important, What kind of churches, by the guidance of the Holy Ghost, were actually formed under the primal conditions of the development of the Christian system among Jews and Gentiles? The answer to this question we shall find in the Acts of the Apostles.

1. The first passage bearing upon the subject is that giving, in the first chapter [verses 15-26], the account of the choice of an apostle in place of Judas. Here the main points of interest are the facts that, although Peter was spokesman and leader of the eleven, he assumed no such primacy as would fill the vacant apostolate, nor intimated that the eleven collectively had power to fill it; but submitted the matter to the whole church of one hundred and twenty members, then present, telling them that from those who were competent one must "*be made*"—as Wiclif rightly translated it, not "*ordained*"—"a witness of his resurexioun with us;" that the church then, literally, "*stood up*"—*i.e.*: requested to stand up—two;" and then, recognizing Christ, who had chosen all of the eleven, to be their still existing, though risen, Master and Head, they prayed him to indicate, by the lot, which of the two he preferred; which resulted in the designation of Matthias.

There is no mistaking this. Even Chrysostom, in regard to it, says :

"Peter did every thing here with the common consent; nothing by his own will and authority. He left the judgment to the multitude, to secure their respect to the elected, and to free himself from every invidious reflection. He did not himself appoint the two; it was the act of all."<sup>1</sup>

I have already alluded to the hierachal sense quietly put upon one of the important words in this passage by King James's translators, in the phrase, "his bishopric let another take." If Judas had had a bishopric, he must have been a bishop; and if Judas had been a bishop, then the man who was to take the vacant place would be a bishop; and the twelve were all bishops together; and so Episcopacy, or government by bishops, would be intrenched in the very beginnings of Christianity. What did the inspired author of the Acts really say? There is no denying that the Greek word [ $\tauὴν ἐπισκοπὴν$  — *tēn episkopēn*], from which comes by etymological descent the word "Episcopal" as describing the office of a bishop, and designating the sect which believes in bishops, is here employed. But there are two facts to be considered before we can decide accurately what, and how much, force is here resident in it.

The first is that it came into the passage from the Septuagint, which is an uninspired Greek translation of the Old Testament, but which, being in common use, was more often cited than the original Hebrew. An examination of the text under consideration [Acts i: 20, last clause] will show that it is a quotation from the

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<sup>1</sup> *Hom. ad Act. i: 25.*

8th verse of the 109th Psalm. Turning to the Hebrew, we find the word there employed to be one whose original sense is “to look after,” “to search into ;” whence it comes to mean “a duty of care, or inquiry.” The Seventy rendered it into Greek by *episkepeō*, whose literal meaning is “to look upon,” and hence “to watch over”—from which that secondary technical sense in which the hierachal churches employ the term is an easy and obvious derivation. But the real question here must be, Was the Hebrew word in the 8th verse of the 109th Psalm used in the primary, or the secondary sense? David was writing hundreds of years before any such functionary as a bishop ever trod the earth. He was simply poetically individualizing, and denouncing, some adversary of God and man. In the midst of his impassioned strain he says [I quote Dr. Murphy’s literal version]:

“Set a wicked man over him,  
And let an adversary stand at his right hand.  
When he is judged, let him come forth guilty,  
And let his prayer become a sin.  
Let his days be few,  
And his *charge*<sup>1</sup> let another take.”

Surely there could be no technical reference here. The simple meaning is, “Whatever function and duty he fulfills in the great work of the world, let some other man perform.”

The second fact to be sought after is, in what sense

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<sup>1</sup> Ainsworth—whose remarkable skill as an interpreter of Hebrew the present generation has again confessed—writing two centuries and three quarters ago at Amsterdam, rendered this: “his *office* let another take.” The Genevan version (1557) had already translated it: “let another take his *charge*.”

the inspired author of the Acts inserted this word. Did Peter, when he referred to the utterance of the Psalm, and did Luke, when he recorded it, use the *episkopēn* of the Septuagint in an official and Episcopal, or in an ordinary and descriptive sense? The first answer to this is found in the declared object of the new election — not to obtain an overseer, or bishop, but a fellow official *witness of the resurrection*. The second is found in the usage of the word in the New Testament. We find it in only three other instances. Twice [Luke xix: 44; 1 Pet. ii: 12] it is translated “visitation.” And once [1 Tim. iii: 1] it describes an office in the church, whose precise nature will be considered further on. It is sufficient here to note that there is no evidence that the word here means anything more than is signified by the general word “charge” or “function”—whatever it might be, and that it could have meant nothing more than that in its employment in the Psalm from which it is brought in here. So that, while only the germs of any system are here developed, they are, so far as they go, essentially democratic in their character.

2. It is next noticeable that [ii: 1, 3, 4] the gift of the Holy Spirit was not confined to apostles or disciples, but was shared by every member. “*All* were with one accord in one place;” and “it sat upon *each* of them;” and “they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost.” This sounds very little like the language of the Episcopal church, which directs the bishop to lay his hands upon the head of the candidate for the priesthood, and say, “Receive the Holy Ghost,” but which has no such word to utter in the ear of its candidates for confirmation and the Lord’s table.

3. The next passage which attracts attention, as having direct relation to this question of polity, is that [ii: 44, 45, interpreted by iv: 32, 34] which refers to the social life of the believers in Jerusalem, in the opening stage of the existence of the Christian church. They "were together ;" that is, they met in the same place, — which is one radical feature of a Congregational church, in distinction from the Presbyterian or Episcopal theories of a great organic all-embracing church, which, as a church, can never be together, but which can only meet in separate congregations, no one of which is a church by and of itself ; and they "held all things as common," which, being compared with and interpreted by the subsequent passage, implies not community of goods, as has often been asserted, but the most democratic temporary sharing of the property which they individually owned, each with other, as daily need might require. No one called the things which he possessed his own ; that is, no one retained possession of his property in a selfish, secluding spirit, which allowed others no benefit from it ; but, on the contrary, they had all things common ; that is, employed all things in such a manner as to supply the wants of all. Wordsworth well calls attention to the fact that the Greek verbs here are in the imperfect [they "were selling," "were dividing," etc.], "giving a vivid picture of what *was continually happening then*, in the infancy of the church, and has never been seen since that time in the same degree." All that is claimed here is, that such a record as this connects itself much more naturally with our own than with any antagonist polity.

4. Next we come [iv: 23-33] to the action of Peter

and John, when, for the good deed done to the impotent man, they had been arrested, imprisoned, reprimanded, and dismissed. When thus let go, they went "to their own ;" that is, not to the apostles—nothing in the context, says Dr. Hackett, requires us to limit the term to the apostles—for when they had made their report to the church, then they *all* prayed, apparently with one voice as well as one spirit ; and, when their prayer was done, they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost ; and—the record runs on without any break—this "mass" [ $\tauὸν πλῆθος$ —*to plēthos*] of believers had one heart and one soul, and great grace was upon them *all*; that is, as Lange [Lechler] says, "not on the apostles only, but on all the believers." This procedure was wholly natural, if substantial Congregationalism were their type of church-life ; wholly unnatural, if not almost incredible, on any other supposition.

5. The choice of the seven helpers [vi: 1–6] next claims our consideration. Difficulty arose between the Hellenist and the Hebrew portions of the church, because of what the former thought an unequal distribution of the daily dole ; whereupon the twelve called together [ $\tauὸν πλῆθος$ —*to plēthos*] the mass of the church, stated the case to them, and told them (1) what they did not desire,—to leave preaching to serve tables ; (2) what they did desire,—to continue to minister the word ; with the outgrowing proposition to the church to choose seven fit men to attend to the secularities. This proposition pleased the [ $\tauὸν πλῆθος$ —*to plēthos*] mass of the church ; and it selected out Stephen and his six associates, and presented them to the apostles, who set them apart to their work by prayer and the laying

their hands upon them. This, taken in all its parts, was a thoroughly Congregational procedure ; radically such, and irreconcilable with any other than the democratic form of church government.

6. What took place on occasion of the first persecution [viii : 1-4] is next in order. It immediately followed the martyrdom of Stephen ; and the result of it was to banish to the surrounding regions of Judæa, and to Samaria, even as far as to Phœnicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch, the great majority of the members of the church at Jerusalem, with the exception of the apostles. But it is expressly said that these fleeing believers “went everywhere preaching the word.”<sup>1</sup> These were private Christians, every one ; clothed with no ecclesiastical function, and invested only with that general priesthood which Congregationalism, in accordance with the word [1 Pet. ii : 5-9], assigns to all believers ; and yet the term here used to designate the manner of that labor is precisely that [*εὐαγγελιζομαι*—*euangelizomai*] which, twenty-two verses after, describes the preaching of Peter and John in Samaria ; which Paul employed [1 Cor. i : 17] to announce his special function of preaching the gospel ; and which he uses nearly twenty times in the Epistles, in that connection. Nor is this all. In the second reference to the same thing [xi : 19, 20], the idea is repeated in another form ; a synonym being used [*λαλέω*—*laleō*], which is after-

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, whose, in many respects admirable, Commentary on the Acts occupies 171 immense and crowded pages, discreetly gets by this verse without a line. Like the Scotch minister of whom Dr. Raleigh wittily spoke at the Boston Council of 1865, he seems to have looked the difficulty boldly in the face, and — passed on.

ward more than once employed to designate the preaching of Paul and Barnabas, as it had been before used [Mark ii: 2] of the preaching of Christ Himself. Thus "the preaching of Jesus to the Greeks in Antioch and elsewhere," says Lange, "was effected not by Peter, nor by any other apostle, but by ordinary Christians and church-members." If these were all substantially Congregationalists, this is a perfectly natural record. If they were anything else, it becomes not merely abnormal, but surprising.

7. The circumstances connected with Paul's first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion [ix: 26-30] next invite a glance. When Paul reached that city, he did not report himself to any primate in command, but sought to join himself unto the body of believers; but they, knowing what he had been of old, and seeming to fear that his alleged conversion might be a feint, were suspicious of him, and drew back, until Barnabas—a neighbor, possibly, and who at least had some previous acquaintance with him, awakening confidence—indorsed him to the apostles; as the result of which, all seem to have been satisfied. And yet it was "the brethren," and not the apostles, who [v. 30] "sent him forth to Tarsus."

8. The next succeeding verse [ix: 31] as given in our authorized version offers one of those bits of indirect testimony which lawyers so much value. "Then," that is, after the persecution which arose about Stephen had subsided, "had *the churches* rest throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria," etc. This was exactly what would be said if the principles of Congregationalism were then recognized and dominant; it was

precisely what would be unnatural, and indeed impossible, in any other state of things. Congregationally, every one of these local assemblies of believers in those three provinces of Palestine was a church, each as fully and truly so as any ; and, in making reference to them, they would be so spoken of, as, in fact they always were ; as witness chapters xiii : 1, xv : 4, xviii : 22, and xx : 17. But, by the Presbyterian or the Episcopal theory, these were only separate branches of the ONE CHURCH, and must have been in that way described. This manner of speaking is, moreover, uniform. Paul [xv : 41] went from Antioch after the contention between him and Barnabas, “through Syria and Cilicia, confirming *the churches* ;” and as the result of his labors, with those of Silas [xvi : 5], were “*the churches* established in the faith.” I am perfectly aware that some manuscripts of good repute give here the singular [*ekklēsia*] rather than the plural form, and that some of the latest exegetes have given to that reading the preference, purely on the grounds of philological criticism. Were there the slightest evidence that a like correction would apply to the cognate passages to which I have just referred, I should feel that they may be right. But, with all deference, it seems to me that—so long as it has still strong support from certain originals—that reading should be preferred which will best maintain the consistency of the record.

9. A circumstance connected with the preaching of Peter at the house of the pagan Cornelius, at Cesarea [x : 48], should not be overlooked. This centurion sends for the apostle to come from Joppa, gathers together his kindred and friends to hear him, and, in

this very hearing, he and they so cordially welcome the truth by faith that the Holy Spirit at once, and with Pentecostal signs, is granted them,—the only instance where it preceded baptism; clearly to remove every scruple as to an act then so novel as the reception of pagans to the Christian church. Whereupon Peter, assuming that no man could forbid the baptism with water of those who had been already baptized by the Spirit, “gave directions [ $\pi\rho\sigma\tau\acute{a}\sigma\omega$ —*pros-tassō*, ‘to arrange at a place’] that they should be baptized in the name of the Lord.” What leans towards Congregational principles, and away from all hierachal notions, here, is that Peter, who is the only “authorized” official named as being there, did not baptize these people himself, but left it to be done by some of the unofficial Christians who were present—apparently of the “certain brethren from Joppa” who had accompanied him—and that the fact was considered of importance enough to be set down.

10. The controversy at Jerusalem which followed this baptism of Gentiles [xi: 1-18] next claims our notice. What took place at Cesarea was soon heard of at the Holy City, and excited attention there; and, when Peter next went there, it led to discussion. Even the primitive churches, being composed of imperfect men, were themselves imperfect; and it was not strange, that, in the welding of the new Christian upon the old Mosaic dispensation, some who had been zealous Jews should unduly cling to Judaism, even to the formation of a party “of the circumcision” in the church at Jerusalem. This party were dissatisfied with Peter’s report of what he had done, and contended with him for so

disregarding the old Mosaic law as to eat with uncircumcised heathen. Justice to them requires the remark that it does not seem to have troubled them that Peter had evangelized Gentiles, but only that he had not first Judaized them by circumcision, before Christianizing them by baptism. Peter replied by a frank statement of the way in which his own scruples had been removed by his vision at Joppa, and by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Cesarea. This quieted all opposition, not merely, but excited the whole church to praise God that the gospel door of hope had been opened to the heathen, as well as to the Jews. Here, now, is no symptom of hierarchy, but every token of democratic brotherhood, and even of apostolic accountability to the associated body of believers.

11. Next we have [xi: 22] the sending of Barnabas to Antioch, on receipt at Jerusalem of the tidings of the great religious awakening which was taking place at this Greek and Roman capital of Syria, as a consequence of the labors of lay Christians there. This sending was done, not by the bishop, nor by the apostles, but by [*ἐκκλησία—ekklēsia*] the whole church; another sample of the working of pure primitive Congregationalism.

12. Next, in the same chapter [xi: 29], we find the record of the action of these Antiochean believers when the “great dearth” took place subsequently in Judea. Then, not the bishop, nor the apostles, not even the elders, moved in the matter; but “the disciples, every man according to his ability, sent somewhat for aid:” and they sent it “unto the brethren;” although Barnabas and Saul placed it in the hands of “the elders,” as

it was perfectly natural and Congregational for them to do.

13. Next we come [xiii: 1-3] to the commission of Barnabas and Saul as foreign missionaries by the church at Antioch. To that church, while assembled with worship and fasting, the Holy Spirit said: "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul, to the work to which I have called them." Then they fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, and sent them off. Here the Holy Spirit spake to the body of believers, not to any bishop or primate; and the body obeyed and acted. The command, says Lange [*in loco*]:

"is not addressed solely to the teachers, but rather to the whole congregation; and the immediate consecration and dismission of the two men demonstrate that *the congregation* had clearly understood the revelation of the Spirit. *The believers* laid their hands on both, commended them to God, and sent them forth."

14. Congruous with this, and precisely responsive to it, was the action of these men on their return from this mission. When, after their journeys, trials, and successes [xiv: 27], they came back to Antioch, no mention is made of any statement to any hierarch; but we are told they called together *the whole multitude of the church*, and [*ἀναγγέλω*—*anangellō*, "to report back"] gave them an account of what they had done, and of what had been done by their means. Could anything be more purely consistent with the Congregational way; more inconsistent with any other?

15. The next chapter [xv: 1-31] describes the consultation at Jerusalem. It was the old question of Judaism up again at Antioch; and that church, to

reach some safe decision upon it, sent up delegates—"Paul and Barnabas, and certain others"—to lay the subject before the mother-church. When they arrived, they were welcomed by the church and by the apostles and elders; and in "a Congregational meeting" [Lange] made a full report of their work among the Gentiles. Then certain Judeo-Pharisaic members objected against this influx of uncircumcised heathen into the Christian church, and on that objection they seem to have adjourned. Another similar meeting was held. Lange says:

"Luke speaks only of the apostles and elders; but it distinctly appears, from verses 12, 22, etc., that the congregation was also present, not merely for the purpose of listening, but also of coöperating in deciding the question."

As the result of which, "it pleased the apostles and elders, *with the whole church*," to send delegates to Antioch, bearing a letter of advice. That letter of advice begins by recognizing the church as coördinate in power with the apostles, and gives the advice expressly as having "seemed good unto us being assembled" [*ὅμοθυμαδόν* — *homothumadon*, "all together"], that is, by unanimous vote.<sup>1</sup> The bearers of the letter went to Antioch; but they gathered the church together before they delivered [to them] that epistle. And after these messengers had made their visit, they were sent back to Jerusalem in peace, from "the brethren."

It would be difficult to conceive of procedures more laboriously calculated to emphasize the essential prin-

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<sup>1</sup> So Lange, Bengel, Stier, and Meyer.

ciples of Congregationalism than these taking place under the eye of the apostles, and in the very presence, and with the active coöperation, of that James who is claimed to have been the first primate of Jerusalem.

16. The letter of commendation [xviii: 27] which Apollos carried from the church at Ephesus to that at Corinth was a Congregational one, not given by the Bishop, but which "the brethren wrote."

17. Paul's sending from Miletus to the elders of the church at Ephesus [xx: 17] was a Congregational procedure. It would be impossible for the whole church at Ephesus to take the journey of some thirty miles to meet him ; so he sent, as we should say, for their pastors and deacons,—their chief men ; and they responded to his call. If Paul had been an Episcopalian, or a Methodist, or a Presbyterian — the more especially if he realized that he was laying foundations, and that it was of the utmost importance that neither his words nor acts should be capable of easy perversion—he would naturally have used different language, and have sent for somebody else.

18. And his address to them [xx: 28] was in the spirit of our system too. These men were elders—that is, pastors—of the church at Ephesus. He sent for them under that name. Yet now he calls them "bishops,"—showing that the only sense which he put upon that word was the Congregational, and not the hierachal, one. "Take heed," he says, "to yourselves, and to all the flock in which the Holy Ghost has set you as [*Episkopous*] BISHOPS!" What a strange High Churchman Paul was, to call these men "bishops"!

Half a score (more or less) of bishops in one local church! Even Episcopalian Dean Alford [*in loco*] says:

"The English version has hardly dealt fairly in this case with the sacred text, in rendering *Episkopous* 'overseers,' whereas it ought there, as in all other places, to have been 'bishops,' that the facts of *elders and bishops having been originally and apostolically synonymous, might be apparent to the ordinary English reader, which now it is not.'*"

19. The little incidental allusions on the journey to Jerusalem, the record of which follows, are alike surcharged with Congregational likelihoods. Paul was "brought on his way" [xxi: 5], not by any bishop or potentate, but by "they all;" he "saluted" [xxi: 7] not the bishop of Ptolemais, but "the brethren;" when, with his companions, he reached Jerusalem [xxi: 17], it was not the bishop, nor the rector, but "the brethren," who received him gladly; and he proceeded to report himself, not to James as primate, but [xxi: 18] to him with "all the elders;" and "*they glorified the Lord,*" and immediately proceeded to make arrangements for subsequent action, when "the multitude" should come together.

20. And so the faint traces of church order and life which show themselves, as from this point the narrative sweeps into a swifter current of personal Pauline history, are of the same description, to the end. They "found brethren" [xxviii: 14], not a hierarch, at Puteoli; and [xxviii: 15] "the brethren" came as far as Appii Forum and Tres Tabernæ to meet them.

But these twenty instances are all on one side. Is there absolutely nothing on the other? Yes: there are exactly five texts in the book of the Acts, which, unex-

plained, have a hierachal look ; and these I will now consider.

1. We learn [viii : 14] that the apostles *sent* Peter and John unto Samaria to labor. But this, in terms, is fatal to the Romanists' assumption of Peter's primacy ; and there is no evidence that the act was in any sense an ecclesiastical one, or anything other than might naturally have been looked for as the result of their mutual consultations as to the best way of fulfilling the Lord's last command.

2. There is a little sound of Episcopacy [xii : 4] in our version's saying "intending, after *Easter*, to bring him forth to the people." But this is a mistranslation. The Greek is *pascha*, which means "the Passover ;" and not only Wiclif, but even the Rheims version, so renders it: "meaning after *the Pasche* to bring him forth." The word occurs twenty-nine times in the New Testament, and King James's translators rendered it "passover" in *every other case*.

3. A much stronger passage [xvi : 4] is that which makes it appear that Paul and Silas, in their second tour among the churches of Asia Minor, "delivered to them *the decrees* for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem." But here, if not positive mistranslation, is a distortion of the meaning, in the direction of a hierarchy. The reference is simply to the course of conduct which the previous chapter shows had been agreed upon by the apostles, elders, and *whole church* at Jerusalem. The word<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek noun *δόγμα* (*dogma*) is derived from the verb *δοκεῖ* (*dokeō*) to think. Hence the primary meaning of *δόγμα* is "that which seems true to one."

translated decrees [*δόγματα* — *dogmata*] means also “advice;” and such here it was. Wiclif hit the meaning exactly when (A. D. 1380) he translated it, “Gave them to *kepe the techyngis that were demed* of apostles and elder men that were at Jerusalem.”

4. In like manner the remark of James, which in our version sounds very like that of a bishop [xv : 19], “Wherefore *my sentence is*,” Wiclif reads, “Of which thing *I deme*;” as also even the Romanist Rheims version: “For the which cause I judge;” the real sense being simply this: “Wherefore my opinion is,”<sup>1</sup> — which makes it a truly Congregational utterance from him.

5. The sole remaining passage, and the only one really deserving the slightest serious consideration, or demanding any special carefulness of exposition for its correct understanding, is that [xiv : 23] which seems to say of Paul and Barnabas, on the first missionary journey, as they passed through Asia Minor, that “they had ordained them elders in every church.” But, whatever else the passage may mean, it *cannot* mean that. Nothing is said about “ordination” in the Greek. It is declared that Paul and Barnabas [*χειροτονίσαντες* — *cheirotonēsantes*, which means “to choose by lifting up the hand,” and hence, “to elect or appoint in any way”] either themselves elected, or superintended the election by each church, of elders. Lange explains it thus:

“The expression suggests the thought that the apostles may have appointed and superintended a congregational election.”

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Εγώ κρίνω, — I, for my part, without dictating to others, *judge*, i. e., decide as my opinion. — Hackett, *in loco*.

Tyndale translated it, "And when they had ordained them elders by eleccion in every congregacion." Cranmer and the Geneva version render it in the same way. But King James's translators, consciously or unconsciously in the interest of Episcopacy, left out the vital words, "by election." If, now, we read it as they did, we put a hierachal sense upon the sentence which is not honest, and we throw the verse out of all natural connection with the system of church affairs then prevailing—if we take the testimony of the entire remainder of the Acts of the Apostles. If we even read it "appointed" elders, we commit Paul and Barnabas to a course nowhere else hinted at. But if we read it "*superintended the election of elders* in every church," we treat the verb fairly as to its etymology and history, and we translate the text into symmetry with the entire spirit of the narrative in which it has its place. Surely, then, no reasonable exegete can fail to reach the result that nothing is to be found here exceptional to what we have seen to be the unvarying testimony of the book.<sup>1</sup>

There is, then, for there can be, but one conclusion. The system of church polity existing in the beginning, and manifesting itself through the Acts of the Apostles, was essential Congregationalism. Not yet fully developed, its germs were those of ecclesiastical democracy, in sharp, continual, and irreconcilable hostility with spiritual aristocracy or monarchy.

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<sup>1</sup>Even Wordsworth [*in loco*] is fair enough to say: "The substantive *χειροτονία* never occurs in the New Testament. The passages where *χειροτονεῖν* occurs in the Apostolic Fathers do not throw much light on the question [Ignat. Phil. x. etc.] They appear to suppose election on the part of the people; whether they do not also suppose ordination by laying on of hands, is not certain."

## SECTION 3. CONGREGATIONALISM IN THE EPISTLES.

Having seen how the foundations of the democratic polity were laid in the teachings of Christ Himself, as recorded in the Gospels, and the structure in some degree elaborated by the apostles under the supervision of the Holy Ghost, we are now prepared to inquire what light, incidental or direct, is thrown upon the subject in the various Epistles.

It will most assist that brevity of statement which must be sought, to classify the testimonies of the Epistles on this subject under the following heads, which, if I mistake not, include them all, viz.: (1) texts which refer to a church, or to churches, in a way scarcely explicable except on the Congregational theory; (2) those which clearly contemplate and advise such a brotherhood as can exist in its fullness only in the Congregational way; (3) those which seem to be founded upon the supposition that the churches were of a democratic character; (4) those which speak of church officers in a manner natural only to Congregationalism; (5) those which require, or refer to, church action possible only to our polity; and (6) those which seem to intimate another system, yet which, when fairly explained, really corroborate all the rest in suggesting ours.

1. The use which is habitually made of the word *ἐκκλησία* [*ekklēsia*] in the singular and plural is such as is consistent only with the Congregational doctrine of the church. In more than fifty instances in the Epistles, the term is used under circumstances clearly implying a single congregation of believers. The *churches* at Cenchrea, Corinth, Philippi, Laodicea, Thessalonica,

in the house of Priscilla and Aquila, in the house of Nymphas, and in the house of Philemon, are specifically named, and one is implied at Hierapolis ; besides the general mention of the *churches* "of the Gentiles," "of Christ," "of God," "of Galatia," "of Asia," "of Macedonia," and "in Judæa ;" besides more indefinite allusions to "the churches," and "all churches ;" and in the Apocalypse we read of the church at Ephesus, at Smyrna, at Pergamos, at Thyatira, at Sardis, at Philadelphia, and at Laodicea ; while these are grouped, and written of collectively, as "the seven churches of Asia." On a careful examination, moreover, it becomes obvious, that, beyond question, some of these churches were so near that they might readily have been fused into one, if it had not been thought expedient to include in a single church only those believers who could conveniently and habitually unite in the enjoyment of its privileges and the performance of its duties. For example, Cenchrea was the suburb and port of Corinth ; yet there were churches at both places. Hierapolis was visible from the theater of Laodicea, and Colosse was near, some think directly between, them ; while Nymphas appears to have lived in or near Laodicea, and it is almost certain that Philemon was a resident of Colosse. So that there is the strongest probability that these five churches—at Hierapolis, Laodicea, Colosse, and in the houses of Nymphas and Philemon—were all situated within a very short distance, probably within far sight, of each other ; near enough, at least, to demonstrate, by the fact of their individual existence, that it was the aim of the apostles to include within a given *ekklēsia* only those members who could

well and regularly share its privileges and carry on its labors. This is not only Congregationalism, but this employment of the term "church" is inconsistent with any other polity. Says the late Dr. Vaughan :

"Its use, as signifying the ministers of religion in distinction from the people, or as embracing all the persons professing Christianity in a province or nation, is unknown to the Sacred Scriptures. We read in the New Testament of 'the church at Jerusalem,' the 'church in the house of Priscilla and Aquila,' and of 'the churches in Judæa, Galatia,' etc.; but we meet with no such phrase as 'the church of Judæa,' or 'the church of Galatia.'"

This application of the term was reserved until the time when Christianity became sufficiently de-spiritualized and debased to be anxious to assert for herself a name and a place among the kingdoms of this world.

2. We find in the Epistles a large number of texts which obviously contemplate, and apparently seek to further, precisely such a spirit of equal brotherhood and co-working, and such mutual responsibility, as are peculiar to Congregationalism. Thrice repeated by Paul to three different churches [Rom. xii : 1-8 ; 1 Cor. xiii : 1-31 ; Eph. iv : 4-16] was the general symbol of a church as a body with many members, having not the same office nor the same gifts ; but yet with none less honorable than others, or less essential to the general work : so that the whole body, thus made up of fraternal parts, maketh increase by that which every joint supplieth. So also he exhorts every Roman believer [Rom. xv : 2] to "please his neighbor, for good ends, to build him up."<sup>1</sup> He is persuaded [xv : 14]

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<sup>1</sup> In the Pauline Epistles, where the sense seems to be improved thereby, I make use of the Conybeare and Howson translation, against which Episcopilians surely ought not to object.

that they are able [of yourselves] "to admonish one another ;" he exhorts "the brethren" [xvi: 17] to keep their eyes upon "those who cause divisions, and cast stumbling-blocks in the way of others, contrary to the teaching which [they] have learned." So he exhorts the Corinthian "brethren" [1 Cor. i: 10] "to shun disputes, and suffer no divisions, but to be knit together in the same mind and the same judgment." It is the only blemish which he suggests as existing in the church at Philippi, that certain of its members were deficient in lowliness of mind, and were thus led into disputes and altercations with their brethren ; and so he says [ii: 2-4], "Be of one accord, filled with the same love, of one soul, of one mind. Do nothing in a spirit of intrigue or vanity ; but in lowliness of mind let each account others above himself. Seek not your private ends alone, but let every man seek likewise his neighbor's good."

He beseeches [Col. iii: 16] "the holy and faithful brethren" at Colosse to "teach and admonish one another, in all wisdom." Peter told the Christians of the churches of Asia [1 Pet. ii: 9, 10] that they, having been chosen out of the world, were a royal priesthood, a separated and holy people, a purchased company, to the end that they should publish abroad the virtues and perfections of God and Christ ; and [iii: 8] he finally exhorts them to be especially mindful of their fraternity of spirit. Paul told the "brethren" of the churches of Galatia [Gal. vi: 2] to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ ; for, if any man exalts himself, thinking to be something when he is nothing, he deceives himself with vain imaginations ;" and he admon-

ished the Hebrews [xiii: 1] to "let brotherly love continue ;" he informed the Romans [xv: 25, 26, 31] that the brethren of Macedonia and Achaia had "willingly undertaken to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem ;" and he asked their prayers that his service in carrying this contribution might "be favorably received" by the brethren there. Very touching, also, is the declaration of John [1 John v: 16]—which implies the lodgment of responsibility for those church-members who wander, not in any functionary, but in the body of the brotherhood—that if any brother "see his brother sinning a sin not unto death [that is, one which does not absolutely annul fellowship with Christ, and cut off faith in Him], he shall ask," and gain for him "life," etc.

3. There is a class of passages in the Epistles which seems tacitly to assume that the state of things was what it could naturally be only if these apostolic churches then existing were Congregational ones. Among these are the first, the salutatory, verses of almost every Epistle. They are not addressed under any designation to the primates of the churches, but almost always to the brotherhoods themselves, precisely as Congregational letters-missive are now addressed. That to the Romans is "to all God's beloved, called to be Christians, who dwell in Rome ;" the first to the Corinthians, "to the Church of God at Corinth ;" the second, "to the Church of God which is in Corinth, and to all Christians throughout the whole Province of Achaia ;" that to the Galatians, "to the churches of Galatia ;" that to the Ephesians [or, as many hold, the Laodiceans], "to the Christians who are at Ephesus"

[Laodicea] ; that to the Colossians, "to the holy and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colosse ;" those to the Thessalonians, "to the Church of the Thessalonians." The others were either more general in their scope, like that to the Hebrews, which is rather a treatise than an Epistle, and was addressed to the class of Christianized Hebrews as such, rather than to the churches of which they were members, and Peter's, which was a general letter to all who had "obtained like precious faith ;" or more specific, like Paul's to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon — with the single exception of that to the Philippians, which is addressed "to all Christians in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, *with the bishops and deacons.*"<sup>1</sup> The reason of this addition does not appear ; but it does appear (1) that this could not have been an Episcopal church at Philippi, or it would have had but one bishop ; and (2) that the church ranked in Paul's eyes before its officers.

So Peter appeals to "*the brethren,*" and seeks [2 Pet. iii : 1] "to stir up [their] pure minds by way of remembrance," when he desires to forefend the cause from the danger of scoffers ; and it is the "*brethren*" whom he is addressing when he says [1 Pet. iv : 11], "If any speak, let him speak as the oracles of God ; if any minister, let him do it as of the power which God bestoweth." It is the hierachal claim that Timothy was a bishop ; but Paul tells him [1 Tim. iv : 6] that "if he puts *the brethren* in remembrance of these things" [that

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<sup>1</sup>"It is singular that the presbyters and deacons should be mentioned separately in the address of this Epistle only. It has been suggested that they had collected and forwarded the contribution sent by Epaphroditus." — *Conybeare and Howson, in loco.*

is, the confutation of various errorists which have just been indicated], “he will be a good servant of Jesus Christ.”

So what Paul says to the Thessalonian church [1 Thess. v : 12] in regard to the treatment which he desires them to give their elders, or pastors, is precisely what would have been natural on the Congregational, and to the last degree unnatural on any other, theory: “I beseech you, brethren, to have due sympathy with those who are laboring among you; who preside over you in the Lord’s name, and keep you in mind of your duty. I beseech you to esteem them very exceedingly in love, for their work’s sake.” Quite akin are the words of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews [xiii : 17]: “Render unto them that are your leaders obedience and submission; for they, on their part, watch for the good of your souls, as those that must give account: that they may keep their watch with joy, and not with lamentation; for that would be unprofitable for you.”

We do not claim that these passages can, of themselves, establish the doctrine of the democracy of the primitive churches; only that they best comport with it, and furnish collateral evidence of weight, when that democracy has been otherwise reasonably proved.

4. The more direct references to the officers of these churches found in the Epistles establish the Congregationalism of those bodies. There are only two orders of church-officers spoken of in the Epistles, viz.: (1) those who are indiscriminately called pastors—in the Apocalypse, “angels;” teachers, presbyters—or elders; and bishops—or overseers; (2) deacons. That the first four names were different designations of the same of-

fice appears, first, from the fact that the same persons are called [Eph. iv: 11] *pastors and teachers*; that the elders are [as 1 Tim. v: 17] spoken of as the only officers besides deacons which the churches had, and hence must be the same as those elsewhere called *pastors or teachers*; and that Paul [Acts xx: 28] expressly told the “*elders*” of the church at Ephesus that the Holy Ghost had made them “*bishops*” of that flock; while Paul to Titus [i: 6, 7] says the “*elders*” must be blameless, for the reason that “*a bishop* ought to be blameless,” etc.; showing that he had the same persons in mind. Then, in the second place, precisely the same qualifications [1 Tim. iii: 2-7; Tit. i: 6-10] are demanded of *pastors, teachers, elders, and bishops*. In the third place, the same duties are assigned to all: (1) to guide the church by counsel and authority [1 Tim. v: 17; Acts xx: 28]; (2) to instruct the church [1 Tim. iii: 5; Tit. i: 9].

And, in the fourth place, the fact that there is not a passage in the New Testament which asserts, or justifies the assertion of, any superior function on the part of the *bishops*, completes the proof that only two orders of officers were known to the churches of the New Testament, and that these were the *pastors*—or *elders, presbyters, or bishops*—and *deacons* of the Congregational churches of the present. Even Peter, who was, if Romanists are right, the very chiehest of the apostles, says [1 Pet. v: 1], “The *elders* which are among you I exhort, *who am also an elder*.” Lange [*Fronmüller*] says on this passage:

“After the apostolic age, the offices of *bishop* and *elders* were gradually separated. During the life-time of the apostles, the

supreme direction of the churches was wielded by them ; but they put themselves on a level with the elders.”<sup>1</sup>

One passage in this connection has given unauthorized comfort to our Presbyterian friends [1 Tim. v: 17] : “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.” But there is no *lay*-eldership here. Lange says :

“No footsteps are to be found in any New-Testament church of lay-elders ; nor were there for many hundred years.”

These were simply associate pastors, some of whom paid special attention to the government of the church, while others were more given to the word and doctrine. And Paul commends those who performed their office well, as being “worthy of a twofold honor.”<sup>2</sup>

But this reference to the two classes of pastors and deacons alone, with the assignment to them of precisely those functions which are usual to officers bearing that name in democratic churches, is proof of the very strongest kind that the churches to which these Epistles were written were democratic churches ; while the

<sup>1</sup> “These terms are used in the New Testament as equivalent,—the former (*ἐπίσκοπος*) denoting (as its meaning of overseer implies) the duties, the latter (*πρεσβύτερος*) the rank, of the office.”—*Conybeare and Howson*, i: 465.

<sup>2</sup> Conybeare and Howson translate this verse, “Let the presbyters who perform their offices well be counted worthy of a twofold honor; especially those who labor in speaking and teaching.”

“No footsteps are to be found, in any Christian church, of lay-elders, nor were there for many hundred years. St. Paul, prescribing Timothy how he should establish the church, passeth immediately from bishops and ministers of the word and sacraments to deacons, omitting these lay-elders, that are supposed to lie in the midst between them.”—*Dr. Washburn* [Episcopalian] in *Lange Van Oosterzee*, in loco.

absence of all reference to a hierarchy is incidental evidence of the weightiest character that none existed until after the canon was closed, and our New Testament was completed as it stands.

5. But perhaps the most convincing proof of the Congregationalism of the primitive churches which is furnished by the Epistles, is found in the illustrations which they give of the method of action pursued in those churches, and in connection with them. Paul [2 Cor. viii : 19] says that Titus "had been chosen by the churches" [of Macedonia] to accompany him in his journey ; and, farther on [v. 23], he calls him and the unnamed brother who was with him, "the messengers of the churches," to the end of transmitting the gift of the Macedonian believers to the church at Jerusalem. This was a purely Congregational procedure. Says Lange [Kling] :

"The persons are mentioned, not as sent of the Lord in any sense, but simply as [*ἀπόστολοι ἐκκλησιῶν*—*apostoloi ekklēsiōn*] messengers of the churches with reference to a single benevolent mission, or journey. It can surely have no reference here to a permanent office, and is used simply as a common noun."

So Paul's hint of the method of Timothy's setting apart to his ministerial work [1 Tim. iv: 14] by "prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the elders" [*πρεσβυτερίου*—*presbuteriou* is translated "elders" in the other two places in which it occurs in the New Testament, and it would make the sense clearer so to translate it here], is as precise an account of the way in which the thousands of Congregational ministers now at their work have been set apart as our language could give. And, in like manner, James's direction

[v: 14], “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him,” etc., whether it be taken of bodily or of soul sickness, was a direction to the primitive churches more consonant with the Congregational than any other polity.

Specially to be noted, however, are the directions in regard to church discipline which the Epistles contain, which agree with what we have seen before to be the law of Christ, and which precisely accord with the Congregational way, but have no congruity with any other. Paul directs Titus to “put the brethren in mind,” among other things [iii: 10], after one and a second admonition, to reject an heretical man. And he directed “the brethren” of the Church of the Thessalonians [2 Thess. iii: 6] “in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to withdraw [themselves] from every brother whose life is disorderly ;” and [verses 14, 15] “if any man be disobedient to my written word, to mark that man, and cease from intercourse with him, that so he may be brought to shame ;” but yet to “count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother,”—counsel which fits the Congregational interpretation of Christ’s law of church discipline, with absolute exactness.

Moreover, Paul gives the Corinthians explicit instructions in the same line of procedure [1 Cor. v: 4, 5, 13], and directs them, when gathered together in the church assembly in the name of the Lord Jesus, to deliver over to Satan a certain gross offender, “that his spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus ;” and adds, “From amongst yourselves ye shall cast out the evil person.” And, in his Second Epistle [ii: 6],

he refers back to the same case, and to the church's compliance with his command, and says, "For the offender himself, this punishment, which *has already been inflicted on him by the sentence of the majority*" [so Conybeare and Howson],<sup>1</sup> "is sufficient without increasing it." We undertake to say that it is simply impossible for our Episcopalian, Methodist, or Presbyterian brethren to harmonize this act of the majority of the brethren of the church at Corinth — which was exactly the carrying-out of the rule of the eighteenth of Matthew, and which Paul first advised, and then comments on as "sufficient" — with their theories, or practice, of polity. Here is clear proof that this rule of Christ for church government was democratically applied under the oversight, and with the approval, of the great Apostle himself.

6. It remains only to glance, in conclusion, at a cluster of two or three texts in the Epistles which appear to contain some hierarchic leaning, that we may see how entirely, after all, those passages coincide in spirit with all that have been already examined.

One [1 Cor. vii: 17] our version translates, "And so ordain I in all churches." This seems to put Paul into a position of primacy, which he never dreamed of claiming. What he said was, "So [*διατάσσομαι* — *diatas-somai*] in all the churches." *Diatassomai* means simply "to put in order," "to arrange."<sup>2</sup> It is the same

<sup>1</sup> "The *πλείονες*, by whom the punishment had been inflicted, could not have been the eldership, but the majority of the church at Corinth." — *Lange* [*Kling*], in loco.

<sup>2</sup> Lange [*Kling*] thus amends the translation of the same verb in another place of the same epistle [xvi: 1]: "Now, concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to [*arranged throughout* — *διέταξα*] the churches of Galatia, even so do ye."

verb which he used [1 Cor. xi: 34] to express "The rest will I *set in order* when I come." And it means here simply, "That is the arrangement which I favor, in all the churches." Wiclif renders it, "As I teche in alle chirchis;" and even the Romanist Rheims translators give it, "As in al churches I teach." King James's version distorts the same verb with the like impropriety, in another text also [1 Cor. xvi: 1], where Paul is made to say, "As I have *given order* to the churches of Galatia." Its meaning there is the same as here.

Another passage [1 Cor. xi: 2] where Paul is represented by our version to command: "Keep *the ordinances*, as I delivered them to you;" which has a look of authority, as of a ruling outside of the church. The Greek word here is *παραδόσεις* [*paradoseis*], which is used thirteen times in the New Testament, and in *every other* instance is translated "traditions;" as "tradition of the elders" [Mark vii: 3, etc.]. The Rheims version renders it here, "As I haue deliuered vnto you, you keepe my precepts."

Still another text is that [Gal. ii: 9] which seems to intimate that "James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars," gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship to go to the heathen, as they to the circumcision—as if with some showing of superior authority. A careful examination, however, puts upon the act another sense. The fact simply was, that, as the result of mutual advisement for the best disposal of the Evangelical forces at command, it was mutually agreed that Paul and Barnabas should labor among the Gentiles, and James, Peter and John among the

Jews ; and, as we may colloquially say, “they shook hands on that ;” for the structure of the Greek seems to make the going of the one party to the circumcision, as true and near a sequence of this symbol of fellowship, as the going of the other to the heathen.

A class of passages remains, which, it has been claimed, “recognize an Episcopate as in being, and give directions as to well-known acts ;” such, for example, as Paul’s direction to Timothy [1 Tim. v: 22] to “lay hands suddenly on no man ;” of which the Hartford *Churchman* once said, “No wrenching will twist these words into harmony with the Congregational system.” We do not doubt the sincerity of such an utterance ; but its ignorance is marvelous and indeed deplorable. It is a part of the duty and privilege of every Congregational bishop to assist, when providentially called to do so, in that ceremony of setting apart to the ministry on behalf of some church, by which ordination is effected now—precisely as it was when the like “gift” was given to Timothy himself “by prophecy, with the laying-on of the hands of the presbytery” [iv: 14]. And it is his duty, as it was Timothy’s, to exercise due deliberation in that act, and not hastily and unadvisedly to assist to place an unworthy man in a worthy place, and so become a “partaker of other men’s sins.” It is not easy, from a Congregational point of view, to see how such passages as this can be made to require any “wrenching,” except it be to make them usable for the support of the Episcopate ; for which purpose one would think they ought to be twisted so far as to make them teach that Timothy was ordained by the hands of *one* bishop, and not of a whole presbytery [equal band] of pastors.

I am entirely ready to concede that there are some texts which need for their true understanding a careful consideration of the peculiar relations of the apostles to the early churches, and which, in the absence of such consideration, may seem susceptible of some slight hierachal tinge and tendency. Chief among these is that [Tit. i: 5] in which—as our version gives it—Paul says to Titus, “For this cause left I thee in Crete; that thou *shouldest set in order* the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee.” The verse, literally translated, reads thus: “For this cause—that thou shouldest further bring into order the things that are wanting in respect to ecclesiastical organization, and especially appoint [or secure the appointment of] elders in every city, as I had arranged beforehand—left I thee in Crete.” Now, our Episcopalian friends insist that nothing can do justice to the intent and substance of this text, but their theory that Paul was a bishop after their pattern, and Titus a bishop of the same kind, and that both lorded it over God’s heritage—which Peter forbade; instead of being ensamples to the flock—which he commanded.

Now, the Congregational theory provides for a special authority, as well as leadership, on the part of the apostles, and so exactly meets all the requisitions of these passages; without flying in the face, in so doing, of all the rest of the New Testament, as the Episcopalian explanation must necessarily do. The apostles were missionaries, with an extraordinary training, inspiration, and authority, peculiar to themselves. They did *rule* these feeble primitive churches, just as our modern missionaries have ruled, for a time, the infant churches

which they have founded on heathen ground. They did this *ex necessitate rei*, — because that was inevitable under the circumstances ; just as the new settler lives in a log cabin a little while, not because that is his ultimate theory of domestic architecture, but because it is the best he can do for the first year ; just as the father guides the tottering steps of his first-born in its amazing initial excursions from one side of the room to the other, because that is the best way of teaching it to walk, and not because he proposes to have the child walk in that manner at maturity, and through life. Paul's directions to Timothy and Titus — his converts — are quite such as are natural, and have been frequent, in the history of our own Congregational missionaries of to-day, in almost those same regions. The churches were what we now call mission-churches, and their pastors [elders] were what we now call native pastors.<sup>1</sup> And, granting all of authority which this theory naturally brings to the explanation of the circumstances of the churches founded by the apostles, we gain apt and abundant explanation of these, in a sense exceptional, texts, and do no violence to the essential Congregational spirit which saturates and characterizes the New Testament as a whole.

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<sup>1</sup> “The *ruling* spoken of in the New Testament is a thing understood in the mission-churches of our day (though perhaps not exactly in the ancient form), where pastoral authority is just as needful in the infancy of these churches, as parental authority is in the early years of a family. Among the churches on the Hawaiian Islands, for instance, the missionaries felt it necessary to exercise authority in the native churches for a course of years; and what of authority remained in the year 1863, and was deemed to be still necessary, was then transferred to the associations and presbytery, the former intending to relinquish it to the local churches, as soon as the native pastorate had made advances to render it a safe deposit.” — Dr. Rufus Anderson in the “*Congregationalist*,” 4 Aug., 1865.

There is one remarkable claim which was put forth some years since by an eminent and accredited journal of the Episcopal church, which seems to deserve a word of notice here. So far as we could understand it, it amounted to this; viz., that large parts of the “other things which Jesus did”—which if they should be written every one, John [xxi: 25] suggested would fill so many books that the world could not contain them—were *oral directions upon the subject of Episcopacy!* This fullness of *vivâ voce* utterance to the apostles, it thought, accounts for the little which it confessed is put down in the New Testament; while it urged that, being from Christ, it is just as imperative as the written word, and deposited its force in the traditions of the Church, which we are bound to receive. To this ingenious theory, it seems to be quite sufficient to reply, that oral utterances in the ears of the apostles which made them *act* on Congregational principles—as we have seen in their Acts and Epistles that they uniformly did,—must have been Congregational in their tenor; so that if this argument from “tradition” be worth any thing, it goes to support the democratic, and not the hierarchic polity.

This closes our examination of the teachings of the New Testament on Church Polity. We have passed in review the principal allusions, nearer or more remote, in the Epistles, to the subject of church government, as before in the Gospels and the Acts, to find that they contain references to the local church and to the churches, which it is difficult to explain unless those bodies then existing were Congregational in form; that they clearly contemplate and advise such a fraternity

as can only be germane to Congregationalism ; that in many places, they seem to take for granted the Congregationalism of all churches ; that they treat of church officers as Congregationalists only naturally and consistently could do ; that they refer to and require church action which only Congregationalists can self-consistently and fully perform ; and that the very few texts which at first glance seem to suggest another system, do so in appearance only, and are rightly explicable only upon a theory which saves their entire force, without throwing them athwart the general tenor of the Word.

This, indeed, was what we had every reason to expect. For it would surely have been very strange, if the Gospels had recorded the foundation laid by Christ for a democratic church government; and the Acts of the Apostles had made it clear that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the apostles and early Christians in point of fact did establish Congregational churches ; and then the practical letters of the same apostles in the years immediately subsequent had ignored them, or implied a different and adverse system. It was most natural that it should be as it is, and that the whole New Testament should cast its absolute weight, without even the deduction and drawback of a single irreconcilable counter utterance, for the democratic polity, in distinction from, and in opposition to, those aristocratic and monarchic corruptions which came in in subsequent centuries, when the gold became Jim, and the most fine gold was changed, and the world first invaded, and then conquered and assimilated, the church.

It must add force to the above argument if a glance be here cast back upon a few of the uninspired Epistles of the early church, and it be in them noted how quickly when others than those commissioned of God to write held the pen—the original Congregationalism faded and vanished, and the superinduced hierarchy came in.

One of the earliest of these apocryphal documents is that which goes by the name of the *First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians*, whose date is assigned to A. D. 97 or thereabouts. In it [chap. xlvi] we find the following [*Writings of Apostolic Fathers* (Edinburgh, 1867), 37]:

“Thus preaching through countries and cities, they [the apostles] appointed the first fruits [of their labors] having first proved them by the Spirit, to be bishops and deacons of those who should afterwards believe. Nor was this any new thing, since, indeed, many ages before it was written concerning bishops and deacons. For thus saith the Scripture in a certain place: ‘I will appoint their bishops in righteousness, and their deacons in faith.’”<sup>1</sup>

Here is some progress from the New Testament, but not much. Perhaps ten or fifteen years later we have the fifteen Epistles ascribed to Ignatius. Eight of these are now conceded to be spurious, while the other seven bear marks of frequent adulteration, which, curiously, seems often to have been undertaken in the interest of heightening the appearance of Episcopal antiquity. For example, in the shorter and purer form of the

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<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the familiar: “I will also make thy officers peace, and thine exactors righteousness” [Isaiah lx: 17], which the Seventy worked over into “I will give thy rulers in peace, and thy overseers in righteousness,” and which Clement took still greater liberties with.

*Epistle to the Ephesians*, we find the following [*Ibid*, 149] :

"Wherefore it is fitting that ye should run together, in accordance with the will of your bishop, which thing also ye do."

The alloyed and expanded revision reads :

"Wherefore it is fitting that ye also should run together in accordance with the will of the Bishop *who by God's appointment rules over you*: which thing ye indeed of yourselves do, *being instructed by the Spirit*."

Further on in the same Epistle we find the purer form reading [*Ibid*, 151] :

"Let us be careful, then, not to set ourselves in opposition to the Bishop, in order that we may be subject to God."

Here again the enlarged and intensified version gives it :

"Do ye, beloved, be careful to be subject to the Bishop, *and the Presbyters and the Deacons*. *For he that is subject to these is obedient to Christ, who has appointed them; but he that is disobedient to these is disobedient to Christ Jesus.*"

In the *Epistle to the Trallians* [referring to 1 Cor. v : 13] we read [*Ibid*, 197] :

"He that is 'without,' is one that does any thing apart from the Bishop, the Presbyters and the Deacons. Such a person is defiled in his conscience, and is worse than an infidel."

In the *Epistle to the Magnesians*, this new Episcopal assertion takes this form [*Ibid*, 178] :

"As, therefore, the Lord does nothing without the Father, for says He, 'I can of mine own self do nothing,' so do ye, neither Presbyter, nor Deacon, nor layman, do anything without the Bishop."

In the *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, it rises to a higher level of assumption still [*Ibid*, 250]:

"He who honors the Bishop shall be honored by God, even as he that dishonors him shall be punished by God. . . . Let the laity be subject to the Deacons; the Deacons to the Presbyters; the Presbyters to the Bishop; the Bishop to Christ, even as He is to the Father."

And the following, from the same *Epistle*, exhibits the full measure of this new assumption [*Ibid*, 248]:

"See that ye all follow the Bishop, even as Christ Jesus does the Father, and the Presbytery as ye would the Apostles. Do ye also reverence the Deacons, as those that carry out the appointment of God. Let no man do anything connected with the church, without the Bishop. Let that be deemed a proper Eucharist which is [administered] either by the Bishop, or by one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the Bishop shall appear, there let the multitude also be; even as where Christ is, there does all the heavenly host stand by, waiting upon Him as the Chief Captain of the Lord's might, and the Governor of every intelligent nature."

"It is not lawful without the Bishop either to baptize, or to offer, or to present sacrifice, or to celebrate a love-feast. *But that which seems good to him, is also well-pleasing to God*, that everything ye do may be secure and valid."

Such teachings, dating back to the former half of the second century after Christ, illustrate forcibly the immense and immeasurable difference between the sacred writings and other most religious productions of those days; while they clearly intimate that process of quiet clerical assumption by which the immature and comparatively uncultured converts of the early generations of Christianity were robbed of their Christian liberty, and the simple government founded by Christ

and the apostles was subverted and hardened into a hierarchy.

In virtue of this rapid, yet I trust candid, review of the entire utterance of Gospels, Acts and Epistles, on the subject of church government, I distinctly and broadly claim — not I hope without due charity towards all whose interpretations lead them to a different result — that the Congregational church polity is the polity of the New Testament, and that its churches are the nearest, and, with all their imperfections, the most faithful representatives now to be found on earth of the churches of the days of the apostles.

I claim, that as Jesus Christ was the head of His church so long as He remained on earth, and besides Him there was no superiority and no ruling, but all were equal brethren, so it was His intent to remain, after His ascension, its invisible but real and only ruler ; ruling through the influences of His Spirit within the broad brotherhood, whose offices should be few and simple, and these for service, and not for show and sway.

I claim that the system of church government which was actually developed under Christ's one law of discipline and general oversight, and through the action and, in some cases when needful, the ruling of the apostles, is proven by the whole tenor of the book of those apostles' Acts to have been essentially and germinantly democratic, in distinction from spiritual aristocracy and monarchy.

I claim that all this, which is inseparably interwoven with the entire texture of the historic portions of the

New Testament, finds natural and unanswerable endorsement from its preceptive portions; so that Gospels, Acts, and Epistles are one in the averment that that democratic polity which is the Congregationalism of to-day, and which Robert Browne rescued and revived from the rubbish of the dark ages, was the polity of the times, the events, and the authors of the New Testament.

Reviewing closely the ground gone over, we shall find the following eleven principles to be the direct assertion, or the necessary implication, of the Scriptures which have been examined. They are therefore the fundamental principles of Congregationalism.

1. Any company of people believing and professing themselves to be Christians, who associate by covenant, on the principles of the Gospel, for Christian worship and work, becomes thereby a true church of Christ.<sup>1</sup>
2. As the rule, such a body should be local—including only such as may conveniently worship and labor together in one place, and easily watch over and aid each other.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, specifically, in proof of the several members of this proposition, the following texts: Heb. xii: 23; Acts ii: 47; Rom. ii: 29; John xv: 5; 1 Cor. vi: 15; Eph. i: 22, 23; ii: 20-22; Tit. ii: 14; Eph. v: 25, 26; 2 Cor. vi: 14-18; Eph. v: 11; 2 John 10, 11; Acts ii: 38; 1 Cor. v: 8; xi: 27-29; 1 Cor. v: 11-13; 2 Thess. iii: 6; Tit. iii. 10; Acts ii: 41-46; Matt. x: 32; Heb. x: 24, 25; Acts viii: 1; xi: 22, 26; Rom. xvi: 1; 1 Cor. i: 2; 2 Cor. i: 1; Rev. ii: 1; iii: 14; 1 Thess. i: 1; 2 Thess. i: 1; Rev. ii: 8, 12, 18; iii: 1, 7; Acts viii: 5; ix: 10-19; ix: 32-38; x: 44-48; xiii: 14-50; xiv: 1-4, 21-23; xvi: 1, 2, 12-40; xvii: 10-14; xx: 5-11; xxi: 4, 7; xxviii: 13-16; Coloss. i: 2; iv: 13; 1 Pet. v: 13; Rom. xvi: 3-5; 1 Cor. xvi: 19; Coloss. iv: 15; Philemon 2.

<sup>2</sup> See the entire New Testament use of the word *ekklēsia*. Also Acts ix: 31; xv: 40, 41; 1 Cor. xvi: 19; Col. iv: 15; Philemon 10; Acts ii: 5, 10; v: 12; xi: 26; xiv: 27; xv: 30; 1 Cor. xi: 20; xiv: 23.

3. Every member of such a church—except so far as Scripture or common sense may have made some special abridgment in the case of female or minor members<sup>1</sup>—has rights, powers, and privileges equal to those of every other.<sup>2</sup>

4. Together, by majority vote—while entire unanimity should always be sought, and in all important matters, by the exercise of a Christian spirit, may usually be gained—the members of such a church have the right and duty of choosing—and, if need be, of deposing—all necessary officers;<sup>3</sup> of admitting, dismissing, and disciplining members;<sup>4</sup> and, in general, of transacting all the appropriate business of a Christian church.<sup>5</sup>

5. Every such local body of covenanted believers is independent of any outward jurisdiction or control—whether from assumed vicegerents of Christ, or from other churches in any associate or individual capacity—being amenable directly and only to their great common Head.<sup>6</sup>

6. Every such local church is on a level of equality of genuineness, privilege and duty with every other church on earth.<sup>7</sup>

7. All such churches, being equal sisters of the great

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. xiv: 34, 35; 1 Tim. ii: 11-15.

<sup>2</sup> Acts vi: 5; xv: 12, 25; xxi: 22.

<sup>3</sup> Acts i: 15-26; vi: 1-6; xiv: 23; xv: 4-31.

<sup>4</sup> Acts ix: 26-30; Matt. xviii: 15-17; 1 Cor. v: 13; 2 Cor. ii: 6; Rom. xvi: 17; 1 Cor. v: 9-13; 2 Thess. iii: 6; Tit. iii: 10; 1 Cor. v: 1-5.

<sup>5</sup> Acts xi: 1-18; xv: 4-31.

<sup>6</sup> See the passages cited under the fourth principle above.

<sup>7</sup> This follows from the fact that all churches get their origin equally from living union with their Great Head.

family of Christ, owe to each other sisterly esteem, fellowship, and coöperation in the common work of the Lord.

8. Such fellowship requires that the advice and countenance of other churches be sought and gained by means of an Ecclesiastical Council, in ordinary cases of demand for it; such as when a church begins its organic life, when a pastor is to be settled or dismissed; and in extraordinary cases when some trouble, with which unassisted it feels itself incompetent to deal, is perplexing a church.<sup>1</sup>

9. The result of such a Council is not in the nature of a judicial decision, but is simply friendly advice—having so much force as there may be force in the reason of it. Yet should a church unreasonably refuse to follow advice thus tendered, and so be led into scandal, sister churches may purify their own fellowship, and bear testimony against disorder and sin, by suspending with regard to it their sisterly relation until the wrong be rectified.

10. Christ has appointed two, and only two, classes of permanent officers for his churches; the first—called by inspiration indiscriminately bishops, elders, evangelists, angels of the churches, pastors and teachers—for the care of its spiritual;<sup>2</sup> the second—called deacons—

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<sup>1</sup> Acts xv: 1-30.

<sup>2</sup> Apostles and Prophets were extraordinary and temporary laborers. So, whatever was meant by "miracles" [1 Cor. xii: 28], "gifts of healings" and "diversities of tongues," appears to have been intended to have no perpetual relation to the churches, and so to describe no permanent offices in them. In like manner "Helps," and "Governments" appear to refer to the same functionaries usually spoken of as pastors and deacons. For the line of proof that these names are all applied indiscriminately, as above suggested, see the argument in my *Congregationalism, etc.*, pp. 100-110. For a discussion of the Presbyterian theory of Ruling Elders see the same, pp. 110-121.

for the care of its temporal concerns;<sup>1</sup> both to be chosen and set apart by the membership from their own number.<sup>2</sup>

11. The coöperation of these churches in the common work of the Lord requires that they devise and prosecute wise methods of joint action; and the history of the rise and progress of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, the American Home Missionary Society, the American Missionary Association, and their kindred voluntary associations through which the members of the American Congregational churches have been and now are coöperating for the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad, illustrates the practicableness of reaching every need by such methods; and the superior value in simplicity, economy, celerity, and all general elements of success, of their voluntary system over the more strongly ecclesiasticized methods of differently organized bodies.

Generalizing these eleven principles to their simplest form, we obtain the following, which are the two germ-elements of the polity of the New Testament:

(a) The independent self-completeness — often known as the *autonomy* — under Christ of the local church.

(b) The equal sisterhood — which might in like manner be known as the *adelphity* — under Christ of all such local churches.

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<sup>1</sup> Acts vi: 1-6; 1 Tim. iii: 1-15.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the whole question of ordination see the manual just referred to, pp. 136-146.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DOCTRINE OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

 BODY must have a spirit, or it is dead. Congregationalism is merely one method — as its advocates believe, the simplest, most efficient and most Scriptural method — of embodying church life, for the carrying forward of church work. But church life rests upon and grows out of, and church work is prompted by, dogmatic conviction.

When our Lord laid down a course of procedure in the case of those offenses which “will come,” — which can be in so good faith followed by no other system, He was speaking not of the adjustment of differences intellectual, æsthetic, passional, between gentlemen at large in human society ; He was addressing the “little ones” of “your Father which is in Heaven,” and seeking the readjustment of ruptured spiritual relations between trespassing brethren of a common faith. The churches which the apostles fostered, and which Paul, Peter, John, James, and Jude addressed in their Epistles, were composed of men who “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ *doctrine* and fellowship.” Those whom “the Lord added” to those churches “daily,” were [*τοὺς σωζομένους* — *tous sozomenous*], those “who are becoming saved ;” that is, those who — as Wordsworth [*in loco*] happily expresses it :

"were escaping (as it were) from the Flood, and taking refuge in the Ark, the Church; those who were flying from the bondage of a spiritual Egypt, and were entering on the way of salvation toward the land of Promise; those who were being delivered from the death of sin, by incorporation into the spiritual body of the Saviour."<sup>1</sup>

The whole tenor of the Acts of the Apostles shows that the Congregational churches of that early time were unquestionably characterized by an intense and overmastering faith in Him whom God had exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour "for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." They ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ. When scattered abroad by persecution they "went everywhere preaching" *that* word. A man must believe with all his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, to be eligible for baptism, which was their initial rite. Only when even such an one as Paul spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the heresies of the Hellenists [Acts ix: 29] was the confidence gained of many who had been "all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple." Paul and Barnabas waxed bold and turned to the Gentiles, because the Jews of Pisidian Antioch put from them the doctrine that through the man Christ Jesus was preached unto them the forgiveness of sins. Paul described to the Athenians when he strove to enlighten and win them to the church, a living God, a Father in heaven, yet a

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<sup>1</sup> "The Greek should have been *τοὺς σεσωσμένους* (perfect), to signify that they had already secured their salvation; and *τοὺς σωθησομένους* (fut.), to signify that they were certain of its completion. The expression implies a certainty resulting not so much from God's purpose, as from human conduct." — *Hackett, in loco.*

ruler commanding repentance, and who hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead. And when, with the elders of the Ephesian church weeping around him, the apostle summed up the story of his past labors among them, and exhorted them in view of his final departure, it was because he had insisted on “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ,” that he took them to record that he was “pure from the blood of all men ;” and his last counsel was that they should beware of “grievous wolves” who would speak “perverse things” and try to draw away disciples after them.

The Congregational churches of the days of the Epistles of the New Testament were taught a stringent rule as to this. Paul thus counseled the church at Rome [Rom. xvi: 17]: “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them [have your eye upon them as the helmsman has his eye upon a rock to be avoided] which cause divisions and cast stumbling-blocks contrary to the *doctrine* which ye have learned, and avoid them,” who “by their fair speaking and flattery deceive the hearts of the guileless.” Still more emphatically he said to the churches of Galatia [Gal. i: 7-9]: “There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the glad-tidings of Christ. But even though I myself, or an angel from heaven, should declare to you *any other glad-tidings* than that which I declared, let him be accursed. As I have said before, so say I now again, if any man is come to you *with a glad-tidings different from that which*

*you received before*, let him be accursed." Paul [2 Tim. ii : 18] took occasion by name to censure certain teachers who, "*concerning the truth* have erred, for they say that the resurrection is past already—overthrowing the faith of some." Titus [iii: 10] he commanded to put the Cretan believers in mind—after a first and second admonition—to reject "*a heretic*;" which, as I suppose this "first and second admonition" to refer to the two "steps" of the 18th of Matthew, I regard as proof that in Paul's judgment a mere difference of doctrinal belief may be of so serious a character as to warrant and demand excision from the church. Pre-eminently, therefore, should it preclude entrance to the church. And, most urgent of all [2 John, 9, 10], the beloved disciple (literally) says: "Every one who *goeth before*<sup>1</sup> [in the cant of the present day, every 'advanced thinker'] and doth not abide in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. . . . If any one come to you and bring not *this doctrine* [that is, if, after the manner of the *Docetæ*, he deny that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh], do not receive him into your house, nor bid him God speed [do not give him, even, such ordinary courtesies as would carry the idea of sympathy with him in his evil faith]; for he that biddeth him God speed makes himself a sharer in his evil deeds."<sup>2</sup>

I need take no more space to bring out the fact that

<sup>1</sup> I regard ὁ προάγων as the truer reading than ὁ παραβαίνων.

<sup>2</sup> "St. John here treats *heresy* as an ἔργον πονηρὸν, a *wicked work*; as sound faith is a *good work*, see John vi. 29. Vain therefore is the notion of those who separate practice from faith, and say that a man may lead a good life without a sound belief. A sound faith is the only root of virtuous practice; and heresy is the source of immorality." — *Wordsworth*, in loco.

the original Congregationalism rested upon a distinct dogmatic basis ; well defined to the minds of that day, and in itself capable of clear, consistent and imperative statement.

I have already remarked that the one thought and passion which three hundred years ago stimulated Robert Browne to the rediscovery and restatement of the overlaid, smothered and forgotten Congregational way of the churches of the first century, was the yearning for a purer and intenser spiritual life than seemed to be attainable in an ecclesiasticism which welcomed every baptized person, simply because he had been baptized, to its inmost privileges. And so far as Barrowe, Greenwood, Johnson, Ainsworth, Robinson, Goodwin, Cotton, Hooker, Davenport, the Mathers, and their gifted associates, who, for its first century, had most to do with elaborating simple Separatism in the direction of the modern development of the Congregationalism of New England, were concerned ; not only was it true in point of fact that questions of mere dogma seldom presented themselves for their discussion, but so fully were they convinced that the ultimate truth on that subject had been, in general, reached by the theologians of the Synod of Dort, and others in whose conclusions they rested, that they scarcely looked to see the Christian world again agitated by any rebellion against the current Orthodoxy.

In the earliest symbol of modern Congregationalism which has come down to us—*A True Description out of the Word of God, of the Visible Chvrch*, from the pen of Barrowe and Greenwood [A. D. 1589]—the following clause is significant in this relation [p. 5]:

"The Doctours [teacher's] speciall care must bee. to build vpon the onely true groundwork, golde, silver and pretious stones, that his work may endure the triall of the fire, and by the light of the same fire, reveale the Tymber, Hay, and Stubble of false Teachers: hee must take diligent heed to keep the Church from errours."

The creed of the London-Amsterdam company, set forth in 1596 by Johnson and Ainsworth, of its forty-five articles devoted the first sixteen to general doctrinal statements covering the Divine existence, the Trinity, decrees, the Fall, Election, the Godhead of Christ, His atoning and mediatorial work, the sanctification and eternal life in Him of the elect, the everlasting perdition of the wicked — and so on.

In the expanded form of the same Confession which some years after was presented to King James [*Apologie or Defence*, etc., 36], it was named as one of the heads of differences between that church and the established Church of England :

"That therfore no knowne Atheist, vnbelever, *Heretique*, or wicked liver, be received or reteined a member in the Church of Christ, which is his body; God having in all ages appointed and made a separation of his people from the world, before the Law, vnder the Law, and now in the tyme of the Gospell."

As illustrating the rigidity of the feeling then current in regard to doctrine, it may be mentioned that the erratic John Smyth, in 1609, was excommunicated by that Baptist church which he had rebaptized himself shortly before to form in Amsterdam, because he had embraced Arminian sentiments.

The endeavor has been industriously made — no doubt from the starting-point of an honest misunderstanding of the facts in the case — to show that John Robinson was the apostle of advanced thinking in

theology, and that when, in his farewell Address to the departing Pilgrims, he was "very confident the Lord had more truth and light yet to breake forth out of his holy Word," he referred to the future liberalization of religious dogma. It is conceded that [Winslow's *Hypocrisie Vnmasked*, etc., 97] he :

"took occasion also miserably to bewaile the state and condition of the Reformed Churches. . . . As for example, the Lutherans, they could not be drawne to goe beyond what Luther saw, for whatever part of God's will he had further imparted and revealed to Calvin, they will rather die then embrace it. . . . And were they now living, saith hee, they would bee as ready and willing to embrace further light, as that they had received."

Looking backward, having our eyes filled with the vision of our times, it is easy and natural to read between such lines an apparent utterance of which the pastor of the Mayflower men never dreamed, and of which he was incapable — from which indeed he would have started back with something almost of holy horror. I cannot take space here to prove the truth of my assertion, but if I am not mistaken I have elsewhere demonstrated<sup>1</sup> that Robinson was thinking of *polity* altogether, and not of religious dogma at all, in these utterances ; so that, notwithstanding these words, he would have been as rigid in his insistence upon the then current Calvinism as the foundation on which all polity must be founded, as Prolocutor Twisse himself.

It goes without saying that the Westminster Confession is thoroughly Calvinistic in its quality. And when

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<sup>1</sup> *The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years, as seen in its Literature, etc.*, pp. 400-409.

the Savoy Synod adopted it as the dogmatic basis of English Congregationalism, they took it "for substance of doctrine." The Cambridge Synod did the same when, in 1648, they did "freely and fully consent thereunto," and "judge it to be very Holy, Orthodox and Judicious." A generation later, the Synod of 1680, as Cotton Mather tells us :<sup>1</sup>

"consulted and considered, what was further to be done for such a Confession. Accordingly, the Confession of Faith consented [to] by the Congregational Churches of England in a Synod met at the Savoy ; which, excepting a few Variations, was the same with what was agreed by the Reverend Assembly at Westminster, and afterwards by the General Assembly of Scotland ; was twice publicly read, examined and approved ; and some small Variations made from that of the Savoy in compliance with that at Westminster ; and so, after such Collations, but no Contentions, voted and printed, as the Faith of New England. . . . It is true, that particular Churches in the Country have had their Confessions by themselves drawn up in their own Form. . . . It is also true that few Learned Men have been admitted as Members of our Churches, but what have, at their Admissions, entertained them with notable Confessions of their own composing ; insomuch, that if the Protestants have been by the Papists call'd *Confessionists*, the Protestants of New England, have, of all, given the most laudable occasion to be called so. Nevertheless, all this Variety has been the exactest Unity ; all those Confessions have been but so many Derivations from, and Explications and Confirmations of, that Confession, which the Synods had voted for them all ; for, *Ut plures Rivuli, ab uno Fonte, ita plures Fidei Confessiones ab una eademque Fidei Veritate, manare possunt.*"

The Saybrook Synod of 1708 made it its first act to adopt the same Confession for Connecticut with a like heartiness of acceptance. So that no well informed

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<sup>1</sup> *Magnalia.* Book v, p. 4.

person will deny, as a matter of historical fact, that strong doctrinal conviction was present as a vital and controlling element in the founding and shaping, and in all the early development, of the New England polity. In the words of a most conscientious and intelligent witness [Dr. Joseph S. Clark, *Hist. Sketch of Cong. Churches Mass.*, 289]:

“Calvinism as a system of *religious faith*, and Puritanism as a code of *moral*s, (the two toughest things that ever entered into the composition of human character) were the original soul and body of these Congregational churches; that unadulterated Calvinism which had been filtered of every Arminian particle by the Synod of Dort, whose ablest defender was John Robinson; that religious Puritanism which had its best development after reaching these shores, and is to be distinguished from a political sort that shot up on the other side of the water. Both these rare elements of power must be taken into the account, in forming a correct estimate of the genius and practical working of New England Congregationalism. It is quite too easily assumed that its appropriate fruits are the product of a mere form of ecclesiastical polity, and not also of the religious doctrines and moral duties that have been fostered beneath that form,—quite too readily inferred that the like fruits will certainly grow wherever the same ecclesiastical *polity* is kept up. An apple-tree, we may presume, will continue to bear apples so long as it produces anything; but their size and quantity and flavor, and consequently their value, will depend very much on the quality of the soil into which it strikes its roots.”

After 1708 no further formal deliverance upon the subject of doctrine proceeded from any synod of the Congregational churches of the land, until the Boston Council of 1865—in which 2,723 churches scattered through twenty-five States and Territories, and embracing 263,296 members, were represented by 516 delegates—took action upon it. That action in set terms was this [*Debates and Proceedings, etc.*, 401]:

"Standing by the rock where the Pilgrims set foot upon these shores, upon the spot where they worshiped God, and among the graves of the early generations, we, Elders and Messengers of the Congregational churches of the United States in National Council assembled — like them acknowledging no rule of faith but the Word of God — do now declare our adherence to the faith and order of the apostolic and primitive churches held by our fathers, and substantially as embodied in the Confessions and Platforms which our Synods of 1648 and 1680 set forth or reaffirmed. We declare that the experience of the nearly two and a half centuries which have elapsed since the memorable day when our sires founded here a Christian Commonwealth, with all the development of new forms of error since their times, has only deepened our confidence in the faith and polity of those fathers. We bless God for the inheritance of these doctrines. We invoke the help of the Divine Redeemer, that, through the presence of the promised Comforter, He will enable us to transmit them in purity to our children."

After some general remarks and statements, the Declaration goes on more specifically to avow:

"With them [all believers] we confess our faith in God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the only living and true God; in Jesus Christ the incarnate Word, who is exalted to be our Redeemer and King; and in the Holy Comforter, who is present in the Church to regenerate and sanctify the soul. With the whole Church we confess the common sinfulness and ruin of our race, and acknowledge that it is only through the work accomplished by the life and expiatory death of Christ, that believers in him are justified before God, receive the remission of sins, and through the presence and grace of the Holy Comforter are delivered from the power of sin, and perfected in holiness. We believe also in the organized and visible Church, in the ministry of the Word, in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, in the resurrection of the body, and in the final judgment, the issues of which are eternal life and everlasting punishment."

This, which seems to be tolerably explicit, was adopted without a dissenting vote. [*Debates, etc., 404*].

I believe I am right in adding that the general understanding of the time was that two things were especially had in mind in this action, viz.: (1) to maintain in the fullest degree the pledge of the faith of the Congregational churches to substantial Orthodoxy, as distinguished from Unitarianism, Universalism, and kindred degradations of the Ancient Doctrine; and (2) to mitigate and meliorate the differences before existing between what had been known as Old and New School views of theological truth, and substantially to establish a platform on which each could frankly and honorably tolerate the other, and both could heartily work side by side toward the common end.

Six years and a few months elapsed when, at Oberlin, Ohio, the entire body of the Congregational churches of the land reassembled by delegation, for those deliberations which resulted in the establishment of the Triennial National Council — at its first session representing 3,202 churches, embracing 312,054 members.

That body laid down as a part of its fundamental law the following [*Minutes, etc., 63*]:

“They [the Congregational churches of the United States, by elders and messengers assembled] agree in belief that the Holy Scriptures are the sufficient and only infallible rule of religious faith and practice; their interpretation thereof being *in substantial accordance with the great doctrines of the Christian faith, commonly called Evangelical, held in our churches from the early times, and sufficiently set forth by former General Councils.*”

This is the actual flag now flying at our denominational mast-head. As a symbol it cannot be claimed to excel in definiteness. Construed strictly by its close it pledges our Congregationalism still substantially to the

old-time Calvinism. Construed more largely by the clause preceding the last, it releases it to a broader fellowship with Evangelical believers who are not Calvinists. And whether its framers understood and intended that its effect should be to give a good standing in our denomination to Arminians equally with Calvinists or not, it was immediately and influentially—and, so far as I know, without special protest—claimed that it practically does so, always provided the great *essentials* of the ancient Orthodoxy receive no detriment.

It is to be lamented — at least so many wise and good men think — that the Council of 1865, which has had controlling influence over the dogmatic movements of the current quarter century — should have thought it wise to deal with so great, and grand, and vital a subject in so vague a manner. It managed to leave itself nearly equally open, on the one side, to the attacks of those who insist that there must have been something of insincerity for the sake of effect, in its appearance of entire indorsement of the Savoy Confession — many clauses of which are confessedly effete ; and, on the other, to the suspicions of those who could not rest content that it should trace with so light a hand its outlines of the Orthodoxy that now is.

This much, at least, seems to be clear : that the Congregational churches of the United States stand pledged before the world by their own voluntary declarations, four times with solemn publicity repeated within fifteen years,<sup>1</sup> to the commonly called Evangelical, in

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<sup>1</sup> I say four times, because I refer to the Boston Council, and to the three sessions of the National Council ; the last two of which reaffirmed — in that they did not modify — the charter adopted by the first.

distinction from the unevangelical doctrines. So that it may earnestly be doubted whether any church, or any minister who — taking the ground that Congregationalism is a mere form of polity which may coexist with *any* dogmatic conviction — claims to remain in good and regular Congregational standing while believing and teaching loose views of Inspiration ; denying the sanctity of the Sabbath ; the divinity of Jesus ; man's need of an atonement, and that need met in the death of Christ ; the salvation of the penitent redeemed by grace, and the everlasting punishment of the impenitent wicked ; be not guilty of the dishonor and the sin of false pretenses in holy things — the sin condemned in the Apocalyptic Epistle to the church in Smyrna, in the case of “those which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.”

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE WORSHIP OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

T is a part of the Christian liberty of a Congregational church that it has entire control over the manner of its worship, subject only to the remote consideration that it shall not so manage it as to make it a scandal and offense to its sister churches, and so a breach of fellowship.

The earliest authentic account of the primitive Congregational methods of worship is found in the *Apology* of Justin Martyr, which describes the state of things existing a little more than one hundred years after the death of Christ. He says [*Apol.*, 87]:

“On the day which is called Sunday, there is an assembly in one place of all who dwell either in towns or in the country, and the memoirs of the Apostles, or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as the time permits. Then, when the reader has ceased, the president [pastor] delivers a discourse, in which he reminds and exhorts them to the imitation of all these good things. We then all stand up together and offer our prayers. Then—as we have already said—when we cease from prayer, bread is brought, and wine and water; and the president [pastor] in like manner, offers up prayers and praises, according to his ability,<sup>1</sup> and the people express their assent by saying, Amen. The consecrated elements are then distributed and received by

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<sup>1</sup>This phrase “according to his ability” is conclusive proof that his prayer was extempore, and that the use of a liturgy in worship had not then been introduced. Fifty years later Tertullian gave like testimony: “We Christians pray [*sine monitore quia de pectore*] without a prompter because from the heart.”

every one, and a portion is sent by the deacons to those who are absent."

Coming down nearly fourteen hundred years, we find in depositions taken at the time now remaining in manuscript in the British Museum, testimony as to the manner of worship used by the Barrowists when, in 1588 and thereabouts, they were seeking under much tribulation to organize their church in London [Deposition of Clem. Campbell. *Harleian MS.*, 7042, p. 15]:

"In the sommer tyme they mett together in the fields, a mile or more about London: there they sitt down upon a Banke, and diverse of them expound out of ye Bible so long as they are there assembled. In the winter tyme they assemble themselves by 5. of the clocke in ye morning to that Howse [the dwelling of some brother] where they make yr conventicle for that Saboth day, men & women together: there they continue in yr kind of prayers and exposition of Scriptures all the day. They dyne together: after dynner make collection to pay for yr dyet & what money is left some one of them carrieth to the prison, where any of their sort be committed. In yr prayer one speaketh, & the rest doe grone, or sob, or sigh, as if they woulde wringe out teares, but say not after him that prayeth: their prayer is extemporall."

In 1592, after the church had had some opportunity to become organized and adjust its processes, we find the method used by them in the administration of the sacraments to have been as follows [Dep. of Daniel Buck. *Harleian MS.*, 7042, p. 399]:

"Baptism was delivered there to ye number of 7. persons, by Johnson, but they had neyther Godfathers nor Godmothers, & he tooke water & washed ye faces of them that were baptized, saying onely in the administration of ys sacrament: 'I do baptize the in ye name of the Father, of the Sonne, & of the Holy Ghost,' without using any other ceremony therein. . . . Being further demanded the manner of the Lord's Supper administred among them, he sayth that five whight loves or more were sett upon ye Table, & that the Pastor did breake ye breade & then delyv-

ered it unto some of them & the Deacons delyvered to the rest: some of the sd congregation sittinge & some standing about the Table: & that the Pastor delivered the Cupp unto one, and he to another, till they had all dronken, useing the words at ye delyverye thereof, according as is sett down in ye eleventh of ye Cor: ye 24th verse."

I condense from Cotton Mather's *Ratio Disciplinæ* (1726) [pp. 42-62] the following account of the "usual services which every Lord's Day calleth for" in his time, when the New England way had been acquiring self-consistency for about one hundred years :

1. The congregations meet twice, at hours "such as they Judge may most suit their Edification."

2. "The Pastor—after the Bills which any of the Neighbours put up, desiring a Remembrance in the Publick Prayers or Praises, on their special Occasions, have been Read—begins with Prayer."

3. "The former and larger Prayer of the Pastor being finished, a Psalm usually succeeds." "Ordinarily the Psalm is read line after line by him whom the Pastor desires to do that service; and the People generally [that is Congregationally, and not by a choir] sing in such grave Tunes, as are most usual in the churches of our Nation."<sup>1</sup>

4. "The SERMON follows." It is here intimated that the "Sermons of New England" then usually reached "a good way into the second Hour."

5. "The Sermon being finished the Pastor makes a shorter Prayer, wherein he recommends the Sermon, and the principal Documents of it, unto the Operations of the Holy Spirit for the effectual Applications thereof unto the Hearts of the People."

6. "Then—at least in the Afternoon—there is another Psalm sung."

7. "In some of the Congregations, they have also on the Afternoon of the Lord's Day, before the latter Psalm, a COLLECTION according to the Apostolical Direction, 1 Cor. xvi: 2....

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<sup>1</sup>"More than a Score of Tunes are heard Regularly Sung in their Assemblies."—*Ibid*, 55.

And the Ecclesiastical expences of the Churches are defrayed, or at least, assisted, out of these Contributions."

8. "When these [exercises] are dispatched, the pastor dismisses the Congregation with pronouncing a Benediction; wishing, *The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit to be with them all.* 'Tis often præfixed with a, *Blessed are all they that hear the Word of God and keep it.* Sometimes there is also specified the *Obedience of Faith,* unto the *main Doctrine* insisted on in the foregoing Sermon."

It is added to the above that, "in many Churches the Reading of Chapters [of the Bible] in Course, with a short prayer for a Blessing on it, is one of the Publick Exercises; nor is any Offence taken in others at them for doing so. 'Tis also by very many of the Pastors wished, that more of the Scriptures were publickly Read, with all due Solemnity in their Assembly; Yea, the Practice obtains more and more; the most of the Pastors appear disposed for it. . . . If there be not a perfect Harmony in the Churches about the Manner of performing this Duty, however there is a perfect Charity."

What has been already set down on this subject makes clear the fact that from the beginning there has been no *essential* change in the order of worship favored by the Congregational churches. The main modification has consisted in the different relations put upon the service of song in the House of the Lord, by the advancing taste of the people in that respect. As this *Hand-Book* may chance to stray among those unfamiliar with Congregational ways, I append here an order of public service which, for substance, is usual at the present time among Congregational churches, as follows:

I. Invocation. [Often, and appropriately, followed, or rather concluded, by the chanting of the Lord's Prayer by the choir, or by that whole congregation which is so doubly happy as to be able to chant and to have no choir.]

## 2. Singing.

3. Reading of the Scriptures. [Where, as is often thought well, this reading includes (*a*) a portion from the Old Testament, and (*b*) also from the New, the *Gloria Patri* may with good effect be chanted (unannounced) between these portions.]

## 4. The principal Prayer.

## 5. Singing [with needful notices].

## 6. Sermon.

## 7. Singing.

## 8. Prayer.

## 9. Benediction.

Baptism is usually administered by sprinkling, but as Congregationalists believe that the reverent application of water, in proper relations, *in any form* by a competent administrator, is baptism, candidates with whom it is matter of conscience, are baptized by immersion. The form of words employed is simply that indicated by the Master [Matt. xxviii : 19] in His last command.

The Lord's Supper is administered usually on the first Sabbath of every other month. Often, as formerly always, this is done at the close of a regular preaching service ; sometimes an entire service is devoted to it. In either case it is usual for the pastor in the name of the church to invite those present who are duly qualified, not members of that particular church, to share with the celebrating church in the ordinance. In the ancient time this required consenting action on the part of the church as to each individual. And later the tenor of invitation ran : "All present who are *members in good standing of churches in fellowship with us*, are invited to partake with us at the Lord's Table." Within a generation this has been by many modified so as to invite "*all members in good standing in Christian*

*churches*" — expressly leaving to each individual the responsibility of deciding whether he become a participant or not, and not necessarily excluding devout members of churches claiming to be Christian with whom the Congregational body is not in formal fellowship, should they desire to unite in the service. More recently some pastors have felt it to be right to widen the invitation to include "all persons who think they love the Lord Jesus Christ," or "who desire to live a religious life, whether members of the visible church or not." This is violently un-Congregational in its essence, because the one regnant idea out of which the Separatism of three hundred years ago evolved itself, was that of being able to purify the Lord's Table of the presence of those who did not belong there. It is, moreover, revolutionary, in its tendency to break down all distinction between the church and the world ; and to discourage the public confession of faith in Christ, and the banding together of those who are His, to be His co-workers in His great work of saving lost men.

Of course such a matter is at the discretion of the churches — which now and then may experiment in unwise directions. But it should be distinctly understood that the Table is the Lord's (not the pastor's), and that it is spread under 'the affectionate care and custody of the church, who (and not the pastor) are responsible for the right administration of all things in connection with it. No pastor, therefore, has the right to give, of his own motion, and simply as pastor, any invitation whatever ; while it is seemly and discreet, in a matter of so much consequence, that the church prescribe such form of invitation to the Lord's Supper

as may satisfy its own sense of what the occasion demands.<sup>1</sup> And it will then become as much the duty of the pastor to confine himself to that form of invitation, as it is his duty, in admitting new members to its fellowship, to confine himself to those Articles of Faith and Covenant which the church has adopted.

It is usually recognized among Congregationalists as seemly that some formal action be taken, in response to the charge of the Apostle [1 Cor. xi: 28] in the way of special self-examination and preparation for the faithful reception of the Eucharist ; and to promote this a familiar lecture called "The Preparatory Lecture"

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<sup>1</sup> See Rule 11, *Form No. 14*, chap. viii. We may be wiser than our fathers, but they had thought this question thoroughly through, and their conclusion [J. Davenport's *Answer of the Elders, etc., unto nine Positions Sent over, etc.,* (1643) 69] was this:

"They that are not capable of Church-censures, are not capable of Church-priviledges; But they that are not within Church-covenant, are not capable of Church-censures: *Ergo.* . . . The Church shall indanger the prophaning of the Seales, and want one speciall means whereby the grace and pietie of men may be discerned and made knowne, for if without respect to their Church-estate, men of approved pietie, as you say, are to be admitted to fellowship in the Seales; how shall their pietie be approved to the Church, not by their owne report of themselves alone, without the attestation of such as are approved by the Church? And how can such beare witnes to their approved pietie, who against light refuse to professe subjection to the Gospel of Christ, by orderly joyning themselves with fellowship to some approved Church of Christ, as members thereof, when they have opportunitie thereunto? Seeing such Church fellowship is an action of true pietie required of all beleevers in the second commandement; and true pietie frameth mens spirits to have respect to all God's commandements; and we have had much experience of it; that men of approved pietie in the judgement of some, have been found too light, not onely in the judgement of others, but also in their owne consciences, when they have come to the tryall in offering themselves to be members of Churches: with such a blessing hath God followed this Ordinance of taking hold of Church-covenant, by publique profession of faith and repentance, before men be admitted to the Seales: But this means of discoverye of mens pietie and sinceritie would be wholly left, if men should be admitted to the Lord's Table, without entering into Church fellowship."

most commonly takes the place of the usual weekly meeting for conference and prayer last preceding the Sabbath on which the Lord's Supper is to be administered.

In the matter of Sunday schools, prayer-meetings, sewing circles and other social meetings, and the general administration of religious affairs, Congregational churches differ in no way from other active Christians ; and it is their fundamental principle that their polity has congenial and welcome place for every wise method of working for the glory of God, and the temporal and eternal good of men, which sanctified ingenuity can devise, and Christian common sense indorse.

As already suggested, Congregationalists enjoy a larger liberty in respect to all things which have been in this chapter discussed, than is within the constitutional reach of Christians of other polities. Any Congregational church, whose taste and sense of expediency may so incline it, is at perfect liberty to order its worship by the liturgy of the Church of England, or the Protestant, or Reformed Episcopal Church of the United States, or by a liturgy of its own. So long as it do nothing which shall give reasonable ground of offense to the other churches with which it is in fellowship, it may order its prayers, its praise, and all the methods of its worship, to its own entire content ; and its pastor, remaining true to our fundamentals of doctrine and of polity, though enrobed and endowed [as by 25 Hen. VIII., c. 19] with "Chasuble, Albe, Amice, Stole, Maniple and Zone, with two blessed Towels, and all their Appendages," would remain, in good faith and entirely, a Congregational minister still.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE WORKING OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

**A**S a matter of course so free a system of church polity as ours cannot tie its adherents with absolute rigidity to any one process rather than another. Yet experience will gradually show which method, of several that are possible, has advantage over others.

#### SECTION I.—FORMATION OF A CHURCH.

When it becomes clear to a sufficient number of believers in any locality, that their own spiritual advantage and the interests of the cause of Christ require the formation of a Congregational church there; having considered the matter with much mutual prayer, they should agree together to undertake the work. Such of them as are already members of churches in that neighborhood, or elsewhere, should request letters of dismission<sup>1</sup> each from his own church to an Ecclesiastical Council to be called to advise as to the formation of the proposed church,<sup>2</sup> and if judged expedient to coöperate in such formation, and admit the said church to Congregational fellowship. The others should stand ready to join on confession of their faith. Let them then appoint a committee to prepare a list of all intend-

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form No. 3*, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form No. 4*, chap. viii.

ing members, with a form of Confession and Covenant,<sup>1</sup> and to do whatever else may be needful in furthering the work. The next step will be to call a Council.<sup>2</sup> This should first of all include those neighboring Congregational churches whose judgment will be worth most as to the wisdom of the establishment of a new church in that spot, and who naturally must assume the chief responsibilities of fraternity with regard to it. To these may be added such, and so many, other churches of our order, as the circumstances of the case naturally suggest.

On the assembling of the Council, and its organization, the committee should succinctly state the case, present the list of persons asking membership, lay before the body the letters of dismission which have been received, and explain the great reasons which actuate them in the movement. The Council may then wish to be by themselves to discuss the main question whether any new church at all be needed in that place. Should it decide to advise that such is the fact, on the resumption of its open session the committee would lay before the Council the Confession of Faith, and Covenant,<sup>3</sup> upon and in virtue of which the new church proposes to become embodied. If, after full examination, the Council reach satisfaction on the points: that the formation of a new church there is expedient; that

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<sup>1</sup> See *Forms* No. 1 and No. 2, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form* No. 5. This Council should be wholly composed of Congregational churches, inasmuch as such only can properly consider the question of the expediency of the admission of a new member to the Congregational fellowship. Other churches in the neighborhood may be courteously invited to be present at the public services.

<sup>3</sup> For aid in shaping such documents. see *Forms* No. 1 and No. 2, chap. viii.

one may wisely be established upon the symbols presented ; that these applicants are suitable persons to become its members ; and that such a new church enjoys a reasonable prospect of self-support, it will vote to advise that the movement go forward ; and will itself take charge of and assist in the public service<sup>1</sup> by which the new body will under the friendly supervision of the Council be constituted by its own members, and be recognized by the churches through their representatives, as in the Congregational fellowship.<sup>2</sup>

If believers desiring to be thus embodied happen to be exceptionally beyond convenient reach of existing Congregational churches, they may, on receipt of the letters dismissing to a new church such as are already in church covenant, rightly proceed, in a prayerful and devoted spirit, to embody themselves on the basis of such a fundamental law as they have agreed to accept, and may elect necessary officers, — remaining an Independent church until, in the Providence of God, other churches may come near enough to be reached by the outstretching of its right hand of proffered fellowship.

#### SECTION 2. — CHURCH OFFICERS.

Some elder brother will naturally call to order a church at its first meeting, and ask the members to ballot for a moderator ; who, when chosen, will take the chair. A clerk ought next to be in the same way elected, who should record briefly the preliminary action out of which the church has grown, and then

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<sup>1</sup> For the form of service usual at such a time, see *Form No. 6*, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form No. 7*, chap. viii, for Result of such a Council.

set down minutely and conscientiously all subsequent church *action*—usually nothing else.<sup>1</sup> The pastor should never be clerk if another can be found who can perform that duty in a tolerable manner. A committee to superintend all necessary action with respect to public worship—including co-arrangements with the Parish or Society, if one exist, or be contemplated, should next be provided, and steps taken for choosing by ballot two or more deacons, for the service of the tables of the church and of the poor. These deacons may well be set apart to their office by special prayer before the first administration of the Lord's Supper. The ancient way was to choose them for life. Many churches now elect them for a term of years.<sup>2</sup> One of these deacons is usually elected the treasurer of the church. The oldest in office of them will naturally act as the chief officer of the church in all matters as to which he is competent to serve, when it is without a pastor—although, in the absence of a settled pastor, or in his presence *when business affecting him is to be*

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<sup>1</sup> What anybody says in favor of or against a measure is not church action, and should not be put on record. But all votes passed, committees appointed, and business done, should be recorded. A proposed vote, amended several times perhaps, and finally lost, should go on the record, because (1) the votes taken with regard to it (even of rejection) are church action; and (2) it is often important to know what was—after consideration—refused to be done by the body.

<sup>2</sup> "I heartily dissent from the *three-year* deacons! The deacon is to purchase to himself a good degree and great boldness, and that good degree means power for good, acquired by long use. And a good old deacon—God bless him!—what is there better, and more to be felt or loved? But a three-year deacon is nobody. He is scarcely old enough to have gotten by the state of veal,—he is not beef at all. The very naming of a three-year trust kills the office. A real live deacon can hardly appear in that figure."—*Horace Bushnell, D.D.: Life*, 492.

*done*, a Congregational church always retains the right to elect by ballot a special moderator, should it so desire. An Examining Committee is by many — by nearly all large — churches habitually chosen as one of its annual needs ; their special function being to confer more fully and confidentially than is possible to the whole church with applicants for membership, and so to facilitate wise discretion in the administration of its affairs. Not infrequently also this is made a committee of discipline, and so, with the pastor, charged with close and constant oversight of the body. Such a committee wisely constituted and administered may realize for a Congregational church all of the benefits, with few or none of the drawbacks, of a Presbyterian Session of Elders.

#### SECTION 3.— THE ECCLESIASTICAL SOCIETY, OR PARISH.

I am not clear that a Congregational church is not now in every State of the Union legally able so to place itself toward the civil law as to be competent to all necessary secularities, alone and without close coöperation with any Ecclesiastical Society, or Parish, whatever. The question can be determined in each case only by local statute. The idea of such a parochial connection is unknown to the New Testament. It came in upon New England as a part of our Congregationalism when it was trying to adjust itself to the changes taking place, as the original — well-meant, natural, but most unfortunate — connection between Church and State was breaking up. At first the town and the church were so nearly one that the same persons acting civilly were the former, and acting ecclesiastically were the latter. Naturally

enough at that time the town assumed, as a portion of the moneys to be raised by it, the expenses of the minister, and — that it might not tax without representation — the church yielded to the town joint action in his election. When the total overturn of these old relations made some new arrangement necessary, the Ecclesiastical Society was devised to take the place of the town, and charged with the raising of the clergyman's salary ; it being understood that the pastor of the church was the minister of the society — which, therefore, was allowed a negative upon the election of the church.

The great arguments by which this parish system has been kept up and extended into new territories where no antecedent arrangements required or prompted it, have been two : (1) the ancient custom of New England, and (2) the idea that it is wise to interest non-church-members in any community, especially men of wealth, social standing, culture and moral worth, in the affairs and administration of the church, in the hope that they may thus be more likely to be drawn within the sweep of the salutary influences of the kingdom of God. But the first of these reasons is easily nulled by the remembrance that an earlier and purer Congregationalism than that of New England — even that of the Acts of the Apostles — throws its entire weight of influence into the opposite scale. While it is a very serious question indeed whether all advantage that can be imagined from the second, is not always liable to be more than counterbalanced by that secularizing which it brings about in the choice of a minister, and the bondage to that portion of the community which is sometimes least under the power of the distinctive

motives of the gospel, under which it places him. Certain it is that again and again a God-fearing, zealous, spiritually-minded, and in all things faithful pastor, has been driven away from a church which, in its vast majority, loved, honored and desired him, because his very fidelity to duty had embittered some one or more "prominent men" of the parish against him. Nor has the case been unknown where preachers who wanted to be unflinchingly faithful, have almost with tears confessed themselves sensible of a constant weakening of courage whenever they have tried to approach certain social evils with regard to which large contributors to their salary were known to be sensitive.

Could the subject now be arranged in view of the experience of the past, and in disregard of all other considerations, I can hardly conceive it possible that any intelligent and hearty Congregationalist would advocate the common New England joint church and parish system as abstractly best for the church, or for the interests of vital godliness in the land. Such being the fact, it would seem to be an easy inference that the true policy to be pursued is to discontinue the Ecclesiastical Society altogether, wherever it prove to be legally possible without detriment to the safe administration of the pecuniary interests of the church ; and in all cases where a society be still on the whole advisable, to mitigate its evils by putting it as closely as possible under church control, or at least augmenting as largely as may be church influence within it.

In all cases where the question becomes a practical one, then it is to be recommended that the advice of a Christian lawyer familiar with the local laws be taken,

and that where, in his judgment, a society be indispensable,<sup>1</sup> two things be sought in connection with its organization. In the first place, if it be possible, make it one of its fundamental laws that membership in it be limited to members of the church with which it is to be associated — thus securing that unity of interest and possibility of church control, which, sometimes vital, is always useful. In the second place, let clear and just rules of joint action between church and parish be adopted, so that, in any event, all things shall be done decently and in order, without possibility of unfair advantage on either side.<sup>2</sup> The organic law governing church and society should especially make it impossible for any committee of the latter body, as a “Committee of Supply,” or in any other guise, month after month, and even year after year, to impose upon the former some preacher, as “acting pastor,” whom they do not desire, and as to whom they have never even had the opportunity of throwing a negative vote.<sup>3</sup>

#### SECTION 4. — PASTORAL CHOICE AND INDUCTION.

We have seen<sup>4</sup> that the New Testament ideal of a pastor is that of a competent member of a church set apart to this office over it. The tendency of the present generation has been increasingly away from this in the direction of a pastor not a member; and, in fact, of no pastor at all but an “acting pastor” or “stated supply.” In many cases this has degenerated until the

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 8, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See for such rules, *Form* No. 9, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See Rule 1, *Form* No. 9, chap. viii.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 49.

relation between ministers and churches is scarcely more sacred, more delicate or more permanent than that between a farmer and his hired men, who come and go from season to season, and from year to year, as he and they can arrange it to "do the best." This is largely due to those false impressions, tastes and demands about preachers, and what constitutes success in the ministry, which have come in and been fostered—perhaps with equal malarial harm to the piety of all concerned; on the one hand from the notions of men of the world that preaching ought to be popular lecturing, and that no minister is fit for his place who can not expatiate in weekly harangues which shall equal in scientific force and literary attraction the deliverance of the man who travels through the land peddling his one great annual "effort" of an hour and a half, at fifty or one hundred dollars and his expenses; and, on the other, from the morbid misconceptions of some unco good whose ideas of pastoral fidelity and thrift are taken from a few famous evangelists, and who feel that nothing is really being done for Christ's kingdom unless the church thermometer constantly register revival heat, and converts all the time congregate in crowds.

It may be hoped that in certain quarters the tide has turned, until some churches are beginning to suspect that God's way may be best, and that solid faithful instruction continued from year to year, and made tender, earnest and untiring by a Christlike spirit behind it, may be mightiest to the pulling down of strongholds. Let us hope the near future may be permitted to see many a Congregational church that has been long blighted by not ill-meaning worldliness on the one side

and by well-meaning fanaticism on the other, once more happy and prosperous under the Scriptural care of one who dwells among his own people long enough to become "to all the country dear ;" and who broods over his charge with tireless patience :

"And, as a bird each fond endearment tries  
To tempt its new fledg'd offspring to the skies,  
He tries each art, reproves each dull delay,  
Allures to brighter worlds and leads the way."

And we may be sure that the change which I have just advocated, by which the churches shall assume the care and charge of their own proper affairs, without parochial dictation, would do more than all else to create and to lengthen pastorates, by making it, in the first place, easy for good and devout people to secure the men of their real choice, and, after, to keep them when once secured.

The first public step toward the choice of a pastor is usually a report to the church from its committee charged with the duty, of the name of some person who it is thought may be had, who would make a good preacher and pastor. He should be fairly and fully heard in the pulpit, his thorough excellence of private character ascertained, his credentials proved to be genuine and ample, and the question of his invitation considered with deliberation and much prayer for divine guidance. A ballot may then be taken. Reasonable unanimity being the result, a concurrent vote should next be sought from the society, where one exists, and proper arrangements for a yearly salary be

made, when a "call" may be extended.<sup>1</sup> If he accept, the next step is for the church—or church and society jointly—to agree with him upon the churches to be invited to sit in Council<sup>2</sup> for the examination of the candidate, and—if satisfied with pastor-elect, church and all joint doings—for—as the agent of the church—ordaining or installing the candidate, and tendering the fellowship of the churches in that service. Extra-ordinaries excepted, the neighboring churches should first of all be invited to constitute this Council, because from their position they must bear the chief weight of the new fellowship. This Council, when assembled, will look over all records and correspondence of church [society] and pastor-elect, with any further documentary or other facts bearing upon the regularity of action thus far taken. If satisfied as to this, the Council will next examine the candidate: (1) as to his good standing in the Christian church, and his intention to become a member of the particular church which has called him—if he have not already become such; (2) as to his approval as a preacher of the gospel at the hands of some competent body; (3) as to his evidence of past fidelity and present good standing, if he have already served in the ministry of the Word; (4) as to his religious experience and the purity of the motives for his entrance upon, or continuance in, the sacred office; and (5) as to the soundness of his theological faith, the sufficiency of his literary culture, and the reasonable probabilities of his success in the position to which he has been called.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 10, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form* No. 11, chap. viii.

This examination, always public, being concluded, the Council in secret session decide whether they are ready—on its request—to set the candidate over the church, and to assume the responsibility on behalf of the churches whom they immediately represent, and of the denomination for whom all act, of introducing him into the Congregational ministry. If they find the way open to do this, they draw up a Result to that effect,<sup>1</sup> and proceed to a public service of Ordination, or Installation—as it is called, if this be not the candidate's first setting apart to the Christian ministry.<sup>2</sup>

#### SECTION 5.—REGULAR CHURCH BUSINESS.

As a Congregational church is a democratic body, it follows closely in its general methods those usual in town-meetings and other like assemblages, and is amenable to the rules of order which commonly obtain in deliberative assemblies.<sup>3</sup>

(a.) *Standing Rules.* As it is always better, and usually easier, to keep out of trouble than to get out of it, it is wise and well for every Congregational church, however small, to adopt some few standing rules which may give definiteness to its ordinary procedures, and, by fixing beforehand upon those methods which experience has proved to be wisest for the transaction of its usual business, avoid the trouble which often arises from doing simple things in a mistaken way.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See for form of such a Result, *Form* No. 12, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See usual order of Ordaining or Installing Service, in *Form* No. 13, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See chap. x.

<sup>4</sup> For a suggested set of Standing Rules, see *Form* No. 14, chap. viii.

(b.) *Admitting members.* Congregational churches, through their pastors, usually at stated intervals invite all who desire to become united with them to apply for that purpose. Small churches, where additions are infrequent, are apt to leave the matter in the hands of the pastor to request the members to remain after any Preparatory Lecture, or other occasion, when one or more candidates may solicit examination. Large churches often give public notice some five weeks previous to the time when the Lord's Supper is next to be administered, requesting all who desire to do so to present themselves before the Examining Committee. So doing they are examined in general as to their agreement in doctrine with the creed of the church ; and, in particular, as to the grounds of their Christian hope, the reasons why they desire, and the purposes with which they would enter upon, church fellowship. If any are strangers, or if doubt in the case of some applicant needs clearing up, a sub-committee is usually appointed to make special and rigid inquiry. On favorable report, those who have thus requested admission are publicly "propounded" as candidates for church membership—an announcement intended to give opportunity for seasonable public protest, should any person in or outside of the church have anything to urge why the proposed action be stayed. At the close of the next Preparatory Lecture, or at some other regular time, the question of the admission of these propounded candidates is put to the vote of the whole church. Candidates by letter from other churches<sup>1</sup> are

<sup>1</sup> See letters requesting and granting such dismission in *Forms* No. 15 and No. 16, chap. viii.

usually (and properly) examined also; such examination being always interesting as opening an acquaintance in Christian character, and sometimes important by reason of the length of time which the letter is made to cover.

Candidates whose reception has been voted are usually formally admitted just previous to the administration of the Lord's Supper, when they stand before the pulpit, and, in presence of the congregation, confess their faith in Christ by public consent to the Articles of Faith and Covenant of the church. Should any be unbaptized, that ordinance is usually administered after assent has been given to the Confession of Faith, and before response to the Covenant.

(c.) *Dismissing Members.* As local churches are the distinguishing feature of Congregationalism, as the rule, all who are, or who ought to be, church-members, ought to be members of the local church with which they habitually worship. This implies a duty of transferred relation whenever such a member in the Providence of God is called to remove his residence from the near vicinity of one local church to the neighborhood of another. In such a case, as the rule to which there can be few fair exceptions, he should request in writing, and the church he is leaving should grant, a letter of dismissal and commendation<sup>1</sup> to the church which it is natural and convenient for him to join. In large churches such requests are often habitually referred to the Examining Committee, on whose favorable report the church acts. The two things to be guarded against

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<sup>1</sup> See *Forms* No. 15 and No. 16, chap. viii.

are, on the one hand, in no way to foster that indisposition to take such letters, which is apt to accompany and indicate a low state of spiritual feeling on the part of the removing members ; and, on the other, to avoid the precipitate commendation of a backsliding and really unworthy person as in good and regular standing.

If a church-member propose long absence, but not definite removal, the pastor or clerk, without special vote of the church, may suitably give him a certificate of commendation to the confidence and communion of all people of God with whom his lot may temporarily be cast.<sup>1</sup>

Should a church-member apply for a letter of dismission to an unevangelical body, his request should be denied, and he be labored with in the endeavor to convince him of the error of the course proposed ; and, should he persist in that request, no course seems open but to put him under censure. No church can give letters implying fellowship, to bodies with which it is not in fellowship. Nor can a church dismiss a member to "any church with which the Providence of God may cast his lot," or to no church. To do the former would be to put out of its own hands the question of its fellowship, and entrust to a single member the ability to compel it into practical fraternity with error from which it might shrink with dismay. To do the latter would be to pass an *ex post facto* law attempting to annul a covenant to which the church is one party, the member another, and the Great Head of the Church the chief ;

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 17, chap. viii.

and which neither can avoid without the consent of the other two—in this case an impossibility.

All dismissed members remain members in full of the dismissing church until they have actually been received by the church to which their relation is to be transferred; although some churches, by special rule, deprive such members of the right to vote except on surrender of the letter.

A letter of dismission is usually on its face limited in validity to six months, or one year. If unused at the expiration of that time its force expires, and the member relapses to full membership in the church which gave him the letter—with the inquiry why he has failed to do as he proposed.

In order that churches may always keep their members in sight, a church receiving a member by letter should notify the church which dismissed him of the fact of such reception; and to facilitate such notification a blank printed form which may be used for the purpose, may wisely be attached to all letters of dismission.<sup>1</sup>

(d.) *Disciplining Members.* The general rule is the Saviour's directions in the 18th of Matthew. There are four varieties of this process of discipline.

[i.] *Private offenses where one church-member only is concerned.* As, for example, a case of profaneness, or intoxication, or dishonest dealing on the part of one member, which is known only to one or two brethren, and has not become a public scandal. The brother aggrieved by hearing such a wrong of another church-

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form No. 16* (last clause), chap. viii.

member should labor with the offender confidentially, in the attempt to bring him to repentance. If successful this ends all. If unsuccessful he should take one or two confidential friends with him, and, with the aid of their reproof and persuasion, endeavor to secure right feeling and action. Should this prove in vain no course remains but—still in a cautious, kindly, and un vindictive manner—to tell it to the church. Many churches—for the purpose of favoring wisdom in the early stages of discipline, make it a standing rule<sup>1</sup> that all such complaints be passed under the review of the Standing Committee before being “told” to the church, that every expedient which the wisdom of the wise can suggest may be employed to right matters, without proceeding to extremities. Should these kindly endeavors prove in vain, the committee must make formal complaint<sup>2</sup> to the church, with detailed charges and specifications, adding the names of the witnesses relied on for proof. Should the church vote to entertain the complaint and try the case—as it necessarily must, unless it have light on the subject unknown to its committee—it will appoint a day for the hearing, and a committee to manage the case, giving ample time for preparation, and seasonably furnishing the offending brother with a copy of the charges, and the names of the witnesses.

Should he at this hearing confess his guilt, the matter could be settled by his making a public confession of his sin (with restitution, where possible), asking for

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<sup>1</sup> See Rule 7 (2), *Form No. 14*, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form No. 18*, chap. viii.

giveness of all particularly offended, of the whole church, and of God. Should he go to trial and be acquitted, that should end the matter, and those who had felt aggrieved ought to accept in good faith the clearance of the church. Should he be convicted, and then break down into confession and its appropriate works, that would end all, as before. Should he remain obdurate, the church must proceed (1) to admonish ; (2) to suspend (say) for three or six months, to try if he will return to a better mind ; or (3) to cut him off altogether from church-privilege by excommunication — according to its best judgment in consideration of his personal characteristics, and of all of the circumstances of the case.

For better security against that hasty action which is often rendered easy in a time of much excitement, yet whose indecorum and injustice are especially to be deplored, many churches provide in their standing rules<sup>1</sup> that no such vote of censure shall be passed without the concurrence of two-thirds or three-fourths of all the male members present.

*Admonition* leaves a member in full possession of all church privilege. *Suspension* for a definite term takes from him all, during the period of its continuance, yet he reverts to full privilege when that suspension expires by its own limitation, unless new action further deprive him. Suspension “until he shall show penitence and ask to be restored,” would continue indefinitely until terminated — on his asking, or on the church’s own motion — by a vote of restoration, or excommunication.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rule 19 (6), *Form No. 14*, chap. viii.

But it is more than doubtful whether such a vote should ever be passed. *Excommunication [ex communione]* casts him out of all the benefits and privileges appertaining to the communion of the church, while it leaves upon him the full pressure of every duty involved in that covenant from which God never can release him. He is a church-member for misconduct outside of all privilege—not a non-church-member; just as a criminal undergoing imprisonment for life for crime, is not a non-member, but an incarcerated member, of human society. Care should be taken by candid and sufficient—not needless and vindictive—public notice of such church votes of censure, to make it sure, as our fathers were fond of saying, that the plaster be as broad as the sore.

[ii.] *Private offenses between more than one church-member.* Two members fall into misunderstanding and think and speak hardly of each other, but as yet there is no public scandal. Either of these may—probably one of them should—commence Christian labor with the other according to the 18th of Matthew. If neither incline to do so, it becomes the duty of any brother who hears of the difficulty to endeavor its removal after the Gospel rule. So begun it should be pursued, after the fashion already outlined, until some end be reached.

[iii.] *Public offenses.* As where a church-member would commit robbery or murder, or leave his own wife and marry another. Here, as in all other cases, what the Gospel seeks, if possible, is the reformation of the offender, on the one hand, as really as the vindication of the honor of the church, on the other. Hence, while, in such cases of flagrant and public misdemeanor

and dishonor, it may be suitable to pass at once a vote suspending such an offender from church privilege until his case can be investigated, all private preliminary steps should be taken before the actual trial; whose result must, unless the Spirit of the Lord interpose with a remarkable work of grace, end in his ignominious expulsion from all church privilege.

[iv.] *Offenses in violation of covenant.* Perhaps a man of lovely character but peculiar mental traits becomes fascinated with Spiritualism, or even with Ingersollism. He forsakes worship, and in various ways breaks his covenant, while at the same time, to all appearance, blameless in life. What shall be done with him? There can be but one consistent answer. The rule of the 18th of Matthew must be applied, and, if tender, serious, faithful private labor fail to reclaim him, the church must deal with him, and if, as he probably will, he remain obdurate, must cut him off. If it will relieve anybody's feelings to pattern this excision after the expression of Paul [1 Tim. vi: 5] "from such *withdraw thyself*," and call the act of his excision a "withdrawal of fellowship" rather than an *excommunication*, I know of no objection to such a course. A censured member (his relation of fellowship with other churches having become impaired) has the right to ask the church to submit his case to the review of a Mutual Council.<sup>1</sup> It is often—I dare not say always—wise in a church to accede to such a request.<sup>2</sup> Should it *unreasonably* decline, he has the right to call a Council *ex parte*.<sup>3</sup> The result of either, it must be remembered,

<sup>1</sup> See *Form No. 19*, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form No. 20*, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See *Form No. 21*, chap. viii.

is only advice, yet advice which — when all has been fairly done — will justify the party accepting and acting on it.<sup>1</sup>

(e.) *Dropping members.* Of late a few churches calling themselves Congregational have introduced a standing rule new to Congregationalism, by which, at the discretion of the body, members who have for a considerable time absented themselves from church communion, and who do not ask letters of dismission and commendation to other churches, instead of being dealt with as covenant-breakers and offenders, may be simply dropped from the roll. The propriety of such action has been the subject of sharp debate, more particularly in connection with a famous case where a member long time absent had circulated and promoted scandals derogatory to the Christian integrity of the pastor, and injurious to the reputation of the church, and the church had "dropped" him under circumstances in some minds giving color to the intimation that it was done in order to avoid what he might say in his defense were he to be proceeded with as an offender. The case came, indirectly, before one of the largest and most famous Ecclesiastical Councils of modern times, which advised [*The Brooklyn Council of 1874*, p. 232] that "the idea of membership in a Congregational church is the idea of a covenant between the individual member and the church;" that "voluntary absence does not dissolve that covenant, but is a reasonable ground of admonition, and, if persisted in, of final censure;" and should such an absentee be complained of as "having circulated and promoted scandal," etc., the "consideration

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form No. 22*, chap. viii.

that he has long ago forsaken the church, is only an aggravation of his alleged fault."

It is not to be denied that there are cases,—especially when large churches, after a considerable period of neglect, are going over their lists of members, to find perhaps dozens and scores who have somehow slipped out of sight until no man knows their whereabouts—when to "drop" them would be the most convenient way of disposing of the subject. But, on the other hand, the church has solemnly covenanted with these people to watch over them, and, should they stray, to give them the benefit of its Christian discipline; and if it have already neglected its duty in allowing them unchecked to wander beyond its oversight, that sin of neglect cannot excuse the further sin of downright falseness to all its engagements of fidelity respecting their eternal welfare. An absent member must be in good and regular standing, or an offender. If the former, he may, and ought to be made to, transfer his relation to the church with which he worships. If the latter, he ought to be dealt with, to the end of reclamation or expulsion. In neither case is there call or excuse for the languid, unfaithful, and timorous expedient of "dropping" him.

(f.) *Restoring offenders.* I have already said that a primary intent of church discipline is the reclamation of the subject of it. The hope, therefore, should always be kept in mind, even in the extremest case of excommunication, that even through this penalty in the flesh "the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus;" and signs of penitence, and a return to faith and duty, should be expected and encouraged. When good ground

for such action appears, the lifting of the sentence of excommunication will, of its own force, restore the excommunicant to good and regular standing once more. He ought not to join the church on confession of faith as if never before a member, because it is better for him, and better for the church and the world, that the real character of the transaction be acknowledged—to promote a due humility on his part, and to encourage and do honor to the faithful administration of gospel discipline.<sup>1</sup>

(g.) *Who are voters?* The early Congregational churches of New England were peremptory in confining the right of suffrage to male members who have reached adult years. Such was understood by them to be alike the requirement of Scripture, and the dictate of reason. John Robinson [*Fust and Necessarie Apologie*, etc. (1625), 39] said :

"By the people whose libertie, and right in voteing we thus avow, and stand for, in matters truly publique and ecclesiasticall, we do not understand (as it hath pleased some contumeliously to upbraid us) women, and children ; but onely men, and them grown, and of discretion : making account, that as children by their nonage, so women by their sex [1 Cor. xiv : 34, 35; 1 Tim. ii: 12] are debarred of the use of authoritie in the Church."

Until within the present generation—although in exceptional instances, and in private assemblies, relaxed—such has been the universal custom of the Congregational churches. Modern notions have led many of them to adopt a different policy. It is, however, believed that a majority still hold to the early practice. While

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<sup>1</sup> See Rule 19 (9), *Form No. 14*, chap. viii.

many look for further light from the result of the experiments of the present, by which at some future time, sated with these new experiences, and persuaded by fair and thorough trial that "the old is better," the churches shall in this, and in some other things, gladly go back to walk once more in the ancient ways.

#### SECTION 6.—HOW TO VACATE CHURCH OFFICES.

The simple principle governing this is that the power which sets up is always competent to set down; so that whenever the church which has elected a member to an office because it thought him most suitable for that honor and that duty, sees reason to change its mind, and becomes convinced that the best interests of the cause of Christ require another arrangement, it has as much—and the same—power to bring about that change, as it had to produce the condition of things that now is. Whenever, then, it comes to be felt by the majority of a church that its best interests demand the removal of any person whom it has placed in any position of official power and responsibility, it should pass a vote kindly and clearly stating that fact, and requesting that person to resign. If this prove ineffectual it should next—in all cases except where the pastorate is concerned—pass a second vote removing the party from his office; which office, thus vacated, it may then proceed to fill. Such a vote is not necessarily, even impliedly, a censure upon the *Christian*—but only upon the *official*—character of the party (whether committee-man or deacon) removed; and therefore he cannot effectually object against it that it is a covert attempt to discipline him in an unscriptural manner.

In the case of the pastorate the matter is complicated by the relation which it bears to the fellowship of the churches, and by the civil contract which exists between the minister and the society, or the church in its parochial character before the law. Here the first step should always be frankly, fully, and in the kindest spirit and manner, to explain to the pastor the fact that the church desires his removal. Probably if this course be seasonably taken, and the people be willing to allow him reasonable time in which to seek another field of labor, and be both just and generous enough to recognize and offer fairly to share the trouble and expense to which they are putting him for their sake ; in nine cases out of ten, such simple suggestion will be found sufficient—inasmuch as ministers, in general, possess no extraordinary desire to stay where they are not wanted. If such a pastor, taken by surprise, ask for more evidence that the desire for his removal has not been overstated, it will be just to give it to him. Should he still demur, the people may then properly request him to join them in calling a Council to consider the facts, and advise concerning them.<sup>1</sup> He may consent provided the Council may judge between him and his people.<sup>2</sup> If he persistently refuse, they may—taking especial pains to secure unmistakable impartiality in its constitution—call a Council *ex parte*.<sup>3</sup> Should such a Council advise his departure, that ought to have serious moral weight with him, and if he be a man of sense and piety, he will yield to such pressure, and ask a

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form No. 23*, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form No. 24*, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See *Form No. 25*, chap. viii.

dismission. If the case be otherwise with him, let the people—on the ground of the unreasonableness of his persistence in endeavoring to remain their pastor, in the face of their desire that he depart, and the judgment of impartial men that he ought to go—decline longer to pay him his salary. Should he be foolish enough to bring suit before the courts for its recovery, it may be deemed eminently probable that he would be worsted on general grounds of equity, and the specific consideration that a man who by his office professes to be a teacher of “whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report,” cannot be encouraged in making himself a scandal to the religion which he professes, and a public nuisance.

Whenever an Ecclesiastical Council dismisses a pastor, it gives him—if it think him worthy of it—the indorsement of its confidence and good will, and some expression of its sense of the value of his ministry;<sup>1</sup> such “clean papers,” of necessity, becoming his principal reliance whenever he seeks resettlement, in virtue of the fact that no respectable Council could go forward to install a candidate, who, having been a pastor, could not produce them.

#### SECTION 7.—HOW TO DEPOSE A MINISTER.

In the possible case of gross heresy or evil life in its pastor, a Congregational church should proceed to discipline him for the same as if he were only a private

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 26, chap. viii.

member, until it has reached the stage of full conviction of guilt. Then—in virtue of the involved fellowship of the churches—instead of proceeding to pass the final vote and pronounce sentence, it should call a Council to advise in the sad case.<sup>1</sup> Should the pastor be so excessively unwise as to decline to unite with them for this purpose, they may call one *ex parte*.<sup>2</sup> This Council should go over the case, and if satisfied of guilt, and the pastor remain impenitent, or if, even though he be penitent, the aggravated circumstances of the case seem to require it, it should advise the church to depose the offender from his ministry, and perhaps excommunicate him from its fellowship.<sup>3</sup> It will then be orderly for the church to accept, and follow, this advice of Council.

On the Congregational theory, as has before been said, every pastor ought to be first a member of his own church. I see no way of efficiently adjusting our system in this respect to that “acting pastor” and “stated supply” phase which has so largely come over our ministry, without taking the ground that whenever a minister assumes the position of *quasi* pastor of a church, he, in so doing and by virtue of that fact, so far joins that church as of his own consent to render himself amenable to its discipline as if he were a member and pastor in full. And I recommend that every church insert some clause to this effect among its standing rules.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 27, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form* No. 28, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See *Form* No. 29, chap. viii.

<sup>4</sup> See Rule 1 in *Form* No. 14, chap. viii.

## SECTION 8.—HOW TO DISFELLOWSHIP A CHURCH.

The contingency of a possible call to do this was present to the mind of our fathers, and was provided for in the "Third Way of Communion" [Chap. xv, Sec. 2, iii] of the Cambridge Platform. This was again recognized, and the process slightly modified [Part III, Chap. i, Sec. 2, viii; Chap. ii, Sec. 11] in the so-called Boston Platform, which, in general, was indorsed by the Boston Council of 1865. The steps to be taken are these: (1) *Any* church grieved by the conviction that a sister church "deliberately receives and maintains doctrines which subvert the foundations of the Christian faith, or that it wilfully tolerates and upholds notorious scandals, or that it persistently disregards and contemns the communion of churches," may in a Christian spirit admonish that church, and labor with it to bring it to a better mind.<sup>1</sup> (2) "If the admonished church refuse to hear its neighbor church, and to remove the offense, it violates the communion of churches," and the admonishing church may orderly assemble a Council to advise concerning the acts and administrations of the offending body.<sup>2</sup> (3) Finding ground for the same, this Council may fitly admonish that body. (4) Should this prove ineffectual in gaining the desired relief, such Council may advise the churches—all others as well as those of whom it may be composed—to "withhold from that erring church all acts of communion till it shall give evidence of reformation."<sup>3</sup> (5) Affirmative response to this will put

<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 30, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form* No. 31, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See *Form* No. 32, chap. viii.

the offending church out of the fellowship of all churches thus acting, and, by inference, of all non-protesting churches, conversely to that rule which constructively puts the whole body of non-protesting churches *into* fellowship with any church which any Congregational Council in an orderly manner receives to the fraternity of those churches which it immediately represents.

#### SECTION 9.—HOW TO DISSOLVE A CHURCH.

When from the subsidence of population or any other sufficient reason, it becomes in its own judgment expedient that a Congregational church should cease to exist, its disbanding reverses the process of its formation. A Council of neighboring churches, whose advice will be most likely to be intelligent and therefore wise, should be called,<sup>1</sup> and on their favoring such procedure the unanimous vote of its members to that end—letters of their dismission to other churches<sup>2</sup> being first provided—will effect the dissolution.<sup>3</sup> Should a minority resist, and claim to be the church still, in plea that a majority vote cannot take away their covenant right to belong to *that* church; it may be replied that only majority action gave them that right, and that an unreasonable and contumacious dissent from the opinion of the major portion of their brethren backed by the judgment of an impartial Council, is entitled to no respect, and becomes in reality an offense worthy of censure. Should opposition still be maintained, the

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 33, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See *Form* No. 35, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See *Form* No. 34, chap. viii.

way becomes open for dealing with them for such offense, and thus making it possible for unanimous assent to the decision of the body in its majority.

#### SECTION 10.—ECCLESIASTICAL COUNCILS.

While every Congregational church is, under Christ, supreme over its own affairs, it sometimes desires light from others upon its path of duty, and ought always to recognize the obligations of fellowship through which it stands related to sister churches. An Ecclesiastical Council is that ordinance of Christ by means of which it seeks such light, and especially manifests such fellowship. It is an assemblage of invited churches through their elected delegates.

(a.) *Who may call a Council?* With two exceptions, a Council must always be called by *a church*. The first exception is that a company of believers desiring to organize into a church may properly invite neighboring churches by Council to advise in regard to, and fellowship their organization. The other exception is when a church after having taken some action in regard to one of its members which has impaired his fellowship with other churches, *unreasonably* refuses to grant him a review of the case by Mutual Council, in which contingency he acquires the right to call one *ex parte*, on the ground [*Winthrop's Journal*, ii: 338] that otherwise "God should have left no means of redress in such a case, which could not be." It is important to notice that this right to call a Council *ex parte* comes into existence only when a church has *damaged the relations of one or more of its members to other churches*. So long as it leaves such persons in good standing, so that they may

commune freely elsewhere; however much they may feel injured and aggrieved, they have no right to take the case to other churches, because they have nothing to complain of so far as *other churches* are concerned; and it must always be presumed that when any church reaches final judgment in any given case, whatever injustice—if any—has been suffered by the way, will be corrected, and there is, therefore, no just reason for interference. But if the matter have been *ultimated* so as to throw any out of old rights and relations with the fraternity, and it be felt that this has been *unreasonably* done, a case at once arises in which that fraternity has interest, and therefore may rightly have something to say. Nothing is more common in a church than for a minority which is simply thwarted in some cherished purpose because it is not the majority, but which has suffered no impairment of rights, to propose to the majority to leave their “difficulties” to a Council, and, when the proposition has been declined, to fancy they have a good case for one *ex parte*. They have no case at all. The church has no right to ask other churches to do what is its own proper work, and the “aggrieved” have no grievance which concerns other churches, because their relations with them remain what they always have been. Of course any church which desires advice has always the right to ask for it. But for a church simply to decline to ask advice when some members wish to have advice taken, is in itself no sufficient ground for the calling of an *ex parte* Council. It is almost always wise, however, for a church to grant a Mutual Council,<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 36, chap. viii.

whenever serious difficulties within it demand adjustment.

(b.) *How a Council is called.* In ordinary cases a committee is chosen to select and nominate to the church the churches to be invited, which are then accepted, and the committee instructed, in the name of the church, to issue Letters-Missive inviting them. In cases of difficulty it is usual, and proper, for each party to nominate one half of the churches, and for both to agree upon some one church which shall constitute the odd number desired, and for the church to adopt the lists thus agreed upon. In such a case it is not to be required that each party should consent to the election of the other party, but each side untrammelled makes its own choice. This is essential because the whole value of such a Council largely depends upon the satisfaction which is felt by all parties to it that they, and their claims, have been fairly considered.

(c.) *Letters-Missive.* These should be precise and comprehensive, and no Council on assembling has the right to add any member not named in the letter, or to consider any question not propounded in it.

(d.) *Quorum.* The presence of a majority of all who have right of membership, constitutes a quorum.

(e.) *Officers.* These are a moderator and scribe, both most wisely to be chosen by ballot. In large Councils having laborious duties before them, each may properly have an assistant.

(f.) *Business.* Only that set forth in the Letter-Missive can properly be considered. And this should be conducted in the way common among deliberative bodies. If it be desired that the case of one or both

parties be presented before the Council by legal or other counsel, it is almost invariably wisest to welcome all such aid, inasmuch as light is the thing especially to be desired, and the members of a Council can be relied on to exercise at least as sound a discrimination as the average juryman in deciding the trustworthiness of an advocate. In examining witnesses somewhat greater freedom is permissible than is sanctioned by the courts, inasmuch as "hear-say" evidence is sometimes of very considerable moral weight, and a Council may be trusted not to be led astray by it.

(g.) *Being by themselves.* A Council always, after having heard all which it seems expedient to hear in the way of testimony and argument, decides in private consultation as to the nature of the advice which it shall give. The course usually taken, after retiring into secret session, is to call the roll and request each member briefly to indicate the nature of that advice which he thinks, under the circumstances, ought to be given. Commonly then a committee is appointed to frame a written result which shall substantially embody the main conclusions reached. Their report is discussed, and perhaps amended, until it takes such shape that—if possible, by unanimous vote—it can be adopted.

(h.) *Result.* In form<sup>1</sup> a Result of Council contains (1) a reference to the Letter-Missive calling it and the object for which it was assembled; (2) an exact list of members present, and of the churches which they represent; (3) a condensed sketch of proceedings, sessions, adjournments; (4) the precise advice agreed upon.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for illustration, *Forms* No. 12 and No. 22, chap. viii.

(i.) *Force of a Council's Result.* In point of Christian principle a Result of Council has just such, so much, and no more, force, as there may be force *in the reason of it*. The presumption is that God will bless His own ordinance, and that the issue of the prayerful deliberation of His children in the way of His appointment, will be animated by His wisdom. In point of human law the force of the result of a Council is this [*Cong. Quarterly*, ii : 62]:

"If a Council has been properly called; if the subject-matter is such as should come before a Council; if its members are impartial; if its investigations are fair; if its decision is clear; then its result, while it must be adopted [by the parties] before it is of any authority, will justify either party conforming thereto."

(j.) *Dissolution of a Council.* The proper vote to be passed so soon as an Ecclesiastical Council has adopted its Result, and tendered the advice which it has to give, is "that it be dissolved." It has no right to adjourn to some definite or indefinite time future, in order to see whether its advice will be taken, that in some contingency it may reassemble and endeavor further action. Should the parties who called it, by and by desire its further presence, they can say so through a new Letter-Missive.

Aside from the Mutual and *ex parte* Councils to which reference has been made, and in which in lesser or in larger degree two parties are involved, Councils are also sometimes assembled by a whole church when it feels the need of advice not necessarily arising from internal strifes so much as from external perplexities; or by several churches in view of some common duty

or danger. To such a Council the name of *Advisory* [*Boston Platform*, Part III, Chap. ii, 7 (3)] has been given.

#### SECTION II.—MINISTERIAL ASSOCIATIONS.

A ministerial Association is a voluntary club of the ministers of a neighborhood. They usually meet in turn at each others' houses, twice, thrice, or four times a year, spending a day or more together in fellowship and in seeking each others' better acquaintance, and mental, moral, spiritual, and professional improvement.<sup>1</sup>

It is probably always laid down in their fundamental law, that in no case shall they undertake any authority over the churches. Yet in two respects, for convenience' sake, they have gradually come to be the depositaries of a *quasi* power, which when suitably managed is of most beneficent character and influence. From the early days of New England the churches, distrusting their own qualifications to test fairly and fully the capacity and promise of young men presenting themselves as candidates for their pulpits, have tacitly agreed that it is wise for such candidates to pass under the judgment of those who are to be presumed to be experts,<sup>2</sup> so that it has long been the regular Congregational practice for students intending to enter our ministry to present themselves for examination as to culture and character to some Association of ministers, whose certificate of approval becomes thereafter their sufficient commendation to the churches.<sup>3</sup> Of late

<sup>1</sup> See *Form* No. 37, chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> See Rule 6, *Form* No. 37, chap. viii.

<sup>3</sup> See *Form* No. 38, chap. viii.

years there has been also a disposition through these Associations to make ministers to an important degree the custodians of each others' professional character. Although an Association is a purely voluntary club, it has yet the right to limit rigidly its membership to pastors, acting pastors, and ex-pastors of orthodox and unblemished reputation ; and should one of its members lapse into irregularity of belief or looseness of life, while it cannot try or depose him, it can say that it no longer esteems his professional character regular, his presence desirable, or his membership agreeable, and can turn him out. And by including in the annual officially published lists of Congregational ministers, only those whose names are returned from each State as being in good and regular standing in the Congregational Associations of that State, some approximation at least is made toward a list weeded of pretenders and reprobates ; inasmuch as each man stands substantially upon the indorsement of his ministerial neighbors, as one regarded by them as worthy to be, and to abide, in their fellowship.

The several district Associations are in most of the States affiliated in State Associations, meeting once a year.

#### SECTION 12.—CHURCH CONFERENCES.

As neighboring pastors are joined in district Associations, so their churches are joined in district Conferences ; usually meeting twice a year for mutual acquaintance, discussion, advice, prayer, and praise. It is always a first principle of such a Conference, that there shall be no interference in the way of attempted control with the churches.

These several district Conferences are usually united together in, and send delegates to, State Conferences which meet once a year.

#### SECTION 13.—DENOMINATIONAL UNION AND EXTENSION.

Since the establishment, in 1871, of the *National Council*, all the Congregational churches and ministers of the United States have been affiliated in it. This on the basis of one delegate triennially chosen by each local Conference for every ten churches in it, and one for each fraction of ten greater than one half; and of one delegate from each State Conference, and one for each ten thousand communicants in the fellowship of that State body, with one for a major fraction thereof—it being intended that such delegates be divided equally between ministers and laymen.

This national body has had its doubters and its enemies, but bids fair so far to intrench itself in the general good will as to acquire permanence, and show constant increase of usefulness.

So far as the joint work of the churches for the advancement of the kingdom of God is concerned, it has been the Congregational way to manage that by voluntary association for Home and Foreign Missions. And careful comparison of the actual results, for example, of the details of the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, with those of the closely church-managed Foreign Missionary Society of our Presbyterian or Episcopal brethren, has never resulted in any disposition on our part to exchange our "voluntary" agency for theirs.

Where there is a will there will be a way. And the

flexibility of the common sense of the methods germane to Congregationalism admirably fits it to seize every opportunity, and ply every enginery, for the salvation of lost men. If its Christian confessors will only awake more fully to its power, and do their own system justice in respect to its own possibilities, the future will be radiant with its triumphs.

#### SECTION 14.—RELATION OF CONGREGATIONALISM TO OTHER DENOMINATIONS.

As has already been intimated, Congregationalism fraternizes warmly with all Evangelical people who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Its most zealous adherents are ready to work with them in the use of all methods by which man can be saved, and God glorified. The simplicity of its processes gives it special advantage for doing this. Its ministers will exchange pulpits with all preachers who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, will join them on the platform, and stand and strive side by side with them in all great moral and spiritual conflicts and endeavors.

With unevangelical believers they can only work in that comparatively limited sphere, where all who mean to be good moralists and good citizens, seek to coöperate for the best welfare of society. When higher planes are approached they are constrained to say as Mary did, by the open door of the sepulcher: "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE ADVANTAGES OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

 HAT is true is always what is best. And having seen that Congregationalism is the polity of the New Testament, we might at once conclude without special further research that in its practical working, when wisely developed and fairly administered, it must prove itself to possess advantages over every other system. At some of these advantages it may, however, be useful here to glance. ✓

#### I.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OVER OTHER POLITIES IN BEING MORE SCRIPTURAL THAN THEY.

The fact has been already shown. This is a conclusive superiority. While many forms of tillage may yield some harvest, that method of culture which best befits the nature of the soil, the quality of the seasons, and the capacity of the husbandman, must naturally gain best and largest return. In like manner, while any and every church which is in any wise truly founded upon the corner-stone of Evangelical truth, may enrich men with something of spiritual benefit, and return some measure of glory to God; that church must be richest in its revenues of blessing for mankind and honor for the truth, which sticks closest to the simplicity and sincerity of the Word.

It is an unspeakable advantage to the Congregational minister that, to the candid, intelligent and unprejudiced reader, the New Testament naturally and inevitably indorses the simple propositions of the democratic polity; while needing to be explained and twisted, or ignored and set aside, to bring it even into a condition of armed neutrality toward spiritual monarchy or aristocracy.

## 2.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OVER OTHER POLITIES IN BEING MORE PRACTICABLE THAN THEY.

It is the only polity which can form and “run” a church regularly without external authority and help; hence as easy to the shipwrecked dwellers upon a before uninhabited shore, as to the citizens of any ward of a crowded municipality. It is the only polity in which Evangelical believers of different preferences, who are not strong enough, and who live in a community not populous enough, to warrant and sustain several different churches, can unite together for practical coöperation; as has been proved again and again at the West, where Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and I know not how many other sorts of families have harmoniously coalesced to form a Congregational church, because, if the first choice of but few, it was the second choice of all. It is the only polity which can create on the ground, and out of itself, a duly authorized ministry, and, consistently with its own principles, make John Adams a real and successful preacher of the gospel, to his little congregation shut out from all the world upon Pitcairn Island. It is most practicable too in that it

leaves all its professors to whatsoever methods may best suit their condition and needs ; making, for example, the English Prayer-Book in Adams's hands, or his own extempore form of devotions, equally canonical before God, and "regular" before men.

Congregational churches can admit, order or discipline a member according to their own sense of what is right and best. They themselves can take the responsibility, without waiting to hear in regard to it from Pope, Convention, Bishop, or Presbytery. There is that in the very necessity of the case which will make any polity which holds itself to an organic wholeness, and requires that all of its parts be governed by that whole, grow weak in discipline as it grows strong in bulk. A General Assembly which should include ten or twenty thousand local congregations, and claim the right, and acknowledge the duty, to sit in final judgment upon every case of difficulty which should reach it by appeal from them, would be obliged to ignore its first principles or must break down in practice, from sheer inability to accomplish such a task. But one hundred thousand Congregational churches might move quietly on together, with nothing but comfort and advantage to each from the increase of all.

And if Congregationalism clearly thus has practical advantage over other polities in the doing of the habitual home work of the churches, none the less is it specially adapted to that work outside of themselves, upon the as yet unevangelized, by which alone Christians can hope to fulfill their Lord's last command, and, going into all the world, preach the gospel to every creature. Experience has thoroughly demonstrated that

the missionary system, outlined in the Acts of the Apostles, which prevailed in the first Christian century, has working advantage over all others. And what that was the second chapter of this volume has sufficiently shown ; as the various missions of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions have practically exemplified both it and its benefits. Well said the members of the Madura Mission [*Minutes of Special Meeting, etc., 112*] :

“Mission churches obviously require the utmost simplicity of structure ; and all that they require, and all that is good for them, may be learned from the New Testament. A local church is God’s institution. . . . No improvement can be made on the simplicity and the efficacy of the New Testament plan for propagating the Gospel among the heathen ; whatever may be thought of the application of it to the old Christian communities of Europe and America.”

### 3.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OVER OTHER POLITIES IN THAT IT MORE PROMOTES POPULAR INTELLIGENCE.

It teaches its members that equal responsibility and privilege rest upon them, and it treats each as if he were a man full grown, to whom Christ has assigned a specific work, and from whom He expects a specific and an intelligent obedience. All the processes of a Congregational church naturally tend in the case of each member to stimulate the mind, to enlarge the views, to enrich the experience, to deepen the sense of responsibility, and to broaden the whole humanity. Some question involving the development and practical application of the idea of right, is liable at any moment to claim decision

from each ; and thus the habit of acting under responsibility and with intelligence is promoted in each, the whole soul is quickened, and independence of thought and action cultured.

As long ago as our Colonial times Edmund Burke declared, in his place in Parliament, that our American "mode of professing religion" was the "main cause" of our "fierce spirit of liberty;"<sup>1</sup> and Congregationalism may point with honest pride to New England with her (conceded) unusual average of popular intelligence, in proof that a free democratic system of religious thinking and acting is in the highest degree favorable to the general culture of mankind. Our polity is the friend of the masses, and seeks not merely to save their souls, but to feed their hungry bodies with wholesome food, and their faint or vacant minds with grand and useful thoughts. The free church is never complete nor content, till it can see by its side the free school.

4.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OVER ALL OTHER POLITIES IN THE UNITED STATES, IN THAT IT MORE EXACTLY THAN ANY OTHER COMPORTS WITH, AND FAVORS, OUR REPUBLICAN FORM OF GOVERNMENT.

Historically it was the mother of the nation. The seed principle of a Congregational church is the republican principles of the State. And being itself a democracy, its natural training of its members is as much better to the use of making them good citizens for the nation, as the discipline of a merchant ship is kindlier

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<sup>1</sup> *Works* (Bohn's ed.), i: 466.

than that of a machine shop, in fitting sailors for the uses of a man-of-war. In educating its members to think for themselves, a Congregational church educates them to be intelligent voters in the State. In school-ing them to accept and discharge more or less weighty responsibilities, it prepares them with some good fidelity to bear the burdens of the commonwealth. To say that the aristocratic or monarchic polities especially befit the American idea of the State, is to proclaim grapes of thorns and prophesy figs of thistles.

5.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OVER OTHER  
POLITIES, IN THAT IT BETTER GUARDS ITS ADHER-  
ENTS AGAINST THE ILL EFFECTS OF SPIRITUAL  
ERROR.

It has less exposure than any other system to the development of error within itself. The experience of the world has proved that there is, under God, no safe-guard against false doctrine so efficient as the Christian common sense of the mass of believers, enlightened, purified, and led by the indwelling Holy Spirit. There is no harder soil on earth in which to germinate the seeds of heresy than that of the stable, well-cultured, and well-balanced members of an Orthodox church ; of whom it is not indeed uncommon to complain, as being conservative to a fault. While, if in any manner some unsound view have gained lodgment within the body, it is at once exposed to attack from the widest possible range. Any and every brother grieved by it gains thereby the constitutional right to attack it, and it may be dealt with at once and on the ground, without need or risk of appeal to a tribunal finally to decree upon it,

which shall be sitting perhaps years hence, and thousands of miles away.

The very isolation and independence which belong to Congregationalism favor this freeness from error. The first thing to be done in a crowded community when a case of zymotic disease occurs, is to segregate the patient, and so cut off all possibility, and prevent all danger, of diffusing the infection. Congregational churches can "withdraw themselves" from erring sister churches, or anti-scriptural and unorthodox preachers, and so the spread of contagion will be checked, if not arrested. If a church-member fall into false doctrine or vicious behavior, the others deal with him and cast him out. If a pastor become unsound in doctrine or evil in life, his church casts him out, and in so doing warns other churches against him. Or, if his whole church should have been corrupted and side with him, its neighbor churches may easily cut the cord of fellowship by which it is holden to them and let the danger drift out of their neighborhood. Had the churches of Massachusetts at the beginning of the present century been bound together into any Presbyterian or other hierarchic unity, instead of sloughing off the Unitarian error, and coming forth from the trial exalted to a higher and nobler and more effective Orthodoxy, there can hardly be a doubt that the struggle would have been infinitely more severe, ending, most likely, in disastrous failure.

In England Presbyterianism, with its much vaunted security against doctrinal decay, became Unitarian; while the "loosely organized" Congregational churches of that land remain to this day essentially sound in the ancient faith once delivered to the saints.

6.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OVER ALL OTHER POLITIES, IN THAT IT MORE TENDS TO PROMOTE THE RELIGIOUS LIFE.

It throws its members, and its ministers, more immediately and habitually than any other system upon God and Christ and the Holy Spirit, for guidance, help and sympathy. This is good for the soul. It puts nothing between the heart and its Divine Lord, and this humbles, purifies and stimulates. Its constant appeal is to the highest range of the motives of the gospel. It has affinity for revivals of religion. And it, more than any other system, urges duty upon individuals. It is the only polity which directly throws the responsibility of success or failure upon its constituent agents; which squarely puts *all* upon *each*. As the exercise of a muscle of the arm causes it to grow in bulk and strength, so this using of the high motives of gospel develops the higher nature. Congregationalism trains, and then trusts, the people. It leans upon them, and each of them. It educates them to feel that — humanly speaking — God has left the work of reconciling the world unto Himself through Christ, to them, and gives them no rest until it be accomplished, and the travail of the Master's soul be satisfied. “By all means save some,” is the watchword with which it sends out these faithful ones to the service of the Most High God. “Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” is the working motto in remembrance of which it asks that every blow be struck, and every duty be done. And it is only the natural result of the normal processes of Congregationalism that her children should preëminently grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord

Jesus ; and that she should ever and anon take up the grateful acclaim: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth."

#### 7.—CONGREGATIONALISM HAS ADVANTAGE OF ALL OTHER POLITIES IN ITS OUTLOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE.

The drift of the world is irresistibly toward popular rights in their free and equal exercise. Even Romanism silently floats that way. And there will be neither retrocession nor retrograde. The oak never can go back into its acorn. A thousand years hence will find every polity, however named, honeycombed with the democratic element. All the other polities will "make obeisance" to our "sheaf." If there be a Pope then, he will be so only in name, while his people will govern themselves and him. I will not say that Congregationalism will have nothing to change to fit itself for the millennium, but I may say with all my heart, it can only need to perfect itself in the line of its own philosophy, and be all which its own normal possibilities suggest, to fit it for the fullness of that brighter day. I believe it is the only polity of which as much can be truly said.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE STATISTICS OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

 HAVE already tried to make it plain on the one hand, in so far as polity is concerned, that those only are fully entitled to the Congregational name who accept both of its focal principles, and acknowledge and practice the adelphity of the churches, as well as maintain the autonomy of the local church ; and, on the other hand, so far as doctrine is concerned, that those only can with entire honesty profess and call themselves Congregationalists who hold the democratic polity in connection with an Evangelical faith. In strictness, then, few beside those who are confederate through the National Council of the Congregational churches of the United States, can be counted as Congregationalists at all ; large numbers who hold the Evangelical faith being on the one side excluded — as are the Baptists, the Free Will Baptists, and (one might almost say) the Independents of Great Britain — because of the looseness with which, if at all, they hold to the fellowship of the churches ; and a lesser number being excluded on the other — like the Unitarians and Universalists — because of the unsatisfactory quality of their creed statements. Still, however, there is a certain fraternity, of a looser sort, between all who hold, with whatever accompanying

tenets, to the Scripturalness and sufficiency of the separate local church, in distinction from an all-embracing organism of which every local body is merely a dependent branch. In this larger and looser sense, and for the specific purpose of comparison with the non-separate churches, we may classify together as Congregationalists in this country the following bodies—in all cases reference being had to their last published statistics of the current year :

	<i>Churches or local bodies.</i>	<i>Members in covenant.</i>	<i>Pastors and ministers.</i>
Unitarians	344	— <sup>1</sup>	— <sup>2</sup>
Universalists	733	37,825	724
Free Will Baptists	1,449	75,686	1,282
Baptists	24,794	2,133,044	15,401
Congregationalists	3,674	382,920	3,585
	30,994	2,629,475	20,992

The number of Independent churches and ministers in Great Britain and her dependencies, so far as I can gather from the occult statements of their *Year-Book* for 1880, runs singularly near to the numbers of both reported in our own Congregational *Year-Book* for the same year; inasmuch as I add up their columns to 3,610 churches and 3,552 ministers, by the side of our 3,674 and 3,585 respectively. The number of their confessors of faith is not given.

In 1760—as we learn from the calculations of President Stiles in his Convention Sermon, preached at that date—the whole number of Congregational churches was 530, distributed as follows, viz.: in Massachusetts (and Maine) 306, Connecticut 170, New Hampshire 43,

<sup>1</sup>No report.<sup>2</sup>No exact statement.

and Rhode Island 11. He estimated that they were then doubling in number about once in thirty years.

Before A. D. 1800, Congregationalism was scarcely known at all out of New England, and the first generation of this nineteenth century had nearly passed before New England Congregationalists emigrating from New England became aware that Presbyterianism was not the same thing under another name, and began to inquire why that Scriptural polity of their fathers, which had done so grand a work on the eastern side of Byram river, should not also prove beneficent on the other side. By what was adroitly called a "Plan of Union," agreed upon in 1801, between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, and the General Association of Connecticut, it was estimated in the Albany Convention of 1852—which [*Proceedings*, p. 71] took action by which the operation of the "Plan" was terminated—that as many as 2,000 churches in the Middle States and at the West, which would otherwise have been Congregational, became Presbyterian.

The first modern approach to an estimate of the statistics of our Congregational churches, appears to have been made in 1845—thirty-five years ago—by Dr. Dorus Clarke in his *Congregational Almanac*, which was continued in the two following years. Dr. Parsons Cooke published the *Congregational Register* in January, 1847. In 1854 the American Congregational Union published its *Year-Book*, since which date—by those *Year-Books* from 1854 to 1859; through the January number of the *Congregational Quarterly* from 1860 to 1878; and through the National Council's official issue from that time to the present—the annual statistics of

our churches have been gathered, year by year, with increasing minuteness and accuracy. For convenience of reference, and by way of substantial encouragement in the demonstration which is here given of the vigor of our polity, I append the summaries on three main points which are thus made available :

	<i>Number of Cong. Churches.</i>	<i>Number of Members.</i>	<i>Number of Cong. Ministers.</i>
1760	530	—	[41 chhs. vacant.]
1845	1,471	165,287	1,412
1846	1,515	176,216	1,501
1854	2,449	207,608	1,843
1855	2,543	212,734	1,935
1856	[returns mixed with Presbyterians]		
1857	2,315	224,732	2,350
1858	2,369	235,369	2,409
1859	2,571	250,452	2,544
1860	2,583	253,765	2,634
1861	2,555	255,034	2,678
1862	2,580	257,191	2,688
1863	2,652	260,284	2,693
1864	2,668	262,649	2,798
1865	2,723	263,296	2,802
1866	2,780	267,453	2,823
1867	2,819	278,708	2,879
1868	2,951	291,042	2,969
1869	3,043	300,362	3,068
1870	3,121	306,518	3,098
1871	3,202	312,054	3,124
1872	3,263	318,916	3,201
1873	3,325	323,679	3,238
1874	3,403	330,391	3,278
1875	3,438	338,313	3,300
1876	3,509	350,658	3,333
1877	3,564	365,595	3,406
1878	3,620	375,654	3,496
1879	3,674	382,920	3,585

The steadiness of this advance during the last twenty-five years is remarkable, and encouraging. Although the data for 1854 are not exact, and include semi-Presbyterian bodies not now ranged with us, the obvious fact that the growth of the quarter century has been very nearly 100 per cent. shows that we are now gaining somewhat more rapidly than Dr. Stiles estimated the progress of his day to be.

There are seven benevolent bodies through which the Congregational churches of the United States especially work for the advancement of the kingdom of God; besides largely coöperating with Christians of other polities through such organizations as the Bible, and Tract, Seamen's Friend, Sunday School, Temperance, Moral Reform, and kindred Societies.

The first of these is the *American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions*, which was established by the General Association of Massachusetts at its meeting in Bradford, in 1810, and which this year reports 17 distinct missions, including 714 stations and out-stations, worked by 156 ordained missionaries, and 260 assistants from America, with a native force of 1,269 laborers, of whom 567 are native pastors, preachers and catechists. It has been permitted to be the means of establishing — not including those at the Hawaiian Islands, which have graduated into self-support, and those which have been passed over to other societies — 272 native churches, including over 17,000 present members on confession of faith. It has also under its oversight 29 training and theological schools, giving instruction to more than 1,000 young men, numbers of whom are preparing for the Christian ministry; 37 schools of the highest order for females, which have

now under instruction over 1,300 girls, many of whom are fitting to be teachers; with 709 common schools, in which over 25,300 pupils are taught. The expenditure of the last year was \$627,861.98, of which 93½ per cent. reached the missions, 3 per cent. was expended in the diffusion of missionary intelligence, and the remaining 3½ per cent. covered all other expenses of administration.

The second is the *American Home Missionary Society*, incorporated under the laws of New York in 1826. It now has nine State auxiliaries, 12 superintendents and general missionaries; and last year employed 1,015 missionaries, who preached regularly in 2,308 stations, and organized 86 churches. This was done with the receipts in cash of \$266,720.41, and in supplies of \$60,000—some \$326,720 in all. Since its work began it has aided in the formation of 4,022 churches—2,053 of which have come to self-support; but, as, until the Presbyterians retired from it a few years since to the maintenance of their own denominational organization, the society was supported by professors of both polities, many of these became Presbyterian churches.

The third is the *American Missionary Association*, which, Providentially brought into being by the condition of things preceding the late rebellion, is now doing an admirable work among the negroes, Indians, and Chinese. It last year reported a total of 79 missionaries, 183 teachers, and 18 other workers; with 69 churches—66 at the South, 2 in Africa and 1 among the Indians; including a total of 4,252 members; and 63 schools—43 at the South, 11 among the Chinese, 6 among the Indians, and 3 in Africa, having, all together, 8,966 pupils. The total of last year's expendi-

ture was \$334,450.67, including Hampton Agricultural Institute and Berea College.

The fourth is the *American College and Education Society*, which was formed in 1874 by the consolidation of the American Education Society, chartered in Massachusetts in 1816, and the Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education at the West, which was formed in 1843. The income of this society for the last year was \$64,122.96 — of which \$38,983.15 was applied to the aid of Western institutions of learning, and \$21,800 appropriated to young men in college and seminary preparing for the Christian ministry. The number of such now receiving the society's assistance is 280. Since its founding (1816) this organization has aided into the pulpit 6734 persons, among whom have been some of the brightest lights of the American pulpit, and many of the most faithful missionaries of the cross. Western Reserve, Illinois, Wabash, and Marietta Colleges, and Lane Theological Seminary received material aid from this source, and ten of the worthiest of the struggling institutions of the Interior and the West are now on its list. The Western Education Society, organized in 1864, and having its headquarters at Chicago, labors also in the same field.

The fifth is the *American Congregational Union*, or as it should more properly be known, the "Congregational Church Building Society." It was founded as the result of the impetus given to the cause by the Albany Convention of 1852; and does its work by promoting the erection of meeting-houses for Congregational churches which are too feeble to undertake the

labor without help. This help it affords in the shape of a small loan (protected by a trust-mortgage) of from \$250 to \$500 [the outside limit]; always with the condition that the money be applied to the payment of last bills, so that no indebtedness, other than to itself, remain. Its payments, the last year, were \$30,676.46. Since its organization it has thus aided in the erection of 1,083 meeting-houses, or more than one third of all now standing; and its judicious and timely help has furthered the work of Home Missions in a degree which it would not be easy to overestimate.

The sixth is the *Congregational Publishing Society*, organized in 1832, and located in Boston, intended to provide such books—including literature for Sabbath schools—as Congregationalists need and desire, and which only requires the invigoration which a generous support would give, to enter upon a work which would soon be perceived to be of invaluable benefit.

The seventh is the *American Congregational Association*, organized in 1853, and especially directing its energies to the collection and preservation in its fire-proof building in Boston [Congregational House, corner Beacon and Somerset Streets] of the literature of the denomination, and which has already gathered a library containing more than 27,500 books, and 120,000 pamphlets, with many important manuscripts; and which, with diligence and care, bids fair before many years in its specialties to rival, if not surpass, the most famous Old World collections of kindred quality.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FORMS USUAL TO CONGREGATIONALISM.

HE following forms of the various papers and documents usual in the working processes of Congregationalism are the result of considerable thought and observation, and are suggested for possible aid to the inexperienced as meeting all the ordinary necessities of such cases. Of course many other methods of phrasing the same ideas may have equal or superior value. Least of all is it to be imagined that such as are here given have any *authority*—other than may exist in manifest fitness for their use.

#### FORM NO. 1.

##### *A Confession of Faith.*

ARTICLE 1. We confess our faith in one God, and in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as His Word to men, revealing our rule of faith and practice.

ART. 2. In accordance with our understanding of that Word, we confess our faith in the three Persons of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; in the Divine eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, and infinite holiness, and in God's righteous Providence over men. We further confess our sinfulness by nature and practice; our trust in the way of salvation graciously provided, for all men who will accept the same by faith, through the voluntary sufferings and death of our Lord Jesus Christ; our obligation to all Christian obedience; and our confidence that He who begins His good work in the hearts of men will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

ART. 3. We further confess our faith in the Lord's Day as a day of secular rest and religious privilege and duty; in the church, local and visible, including those who covenant together in one place, and universal and invisible, embracing all them that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours; in the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the heritage of the church and of the church alone; in the resurrection of the dead, and the final judgment, in the which God shall declare His righteousness in the salvation of His people, and the eternal rejection of His enemies.

#### FORM NO. 2.

##### *A Church Covenant.*

We, who feel called of God to join ourselves into a church-state, having a deep sense of our unworthiness thereof, disability thereto, and aptness to forsake the Lord and our duty to Him and to each other, do hereby, in the name of Jesus Christ, and imploring His grace to supplement our weakness to the worthy performance of our vows—solemnly covenant and agree to walk in this church in all His ways, made known, or to be made known unto us, according to our best endeavors, whatsoever it shall cost us, the Lord assisting us.

And, particularly, we covenant and agree: to seek to live supremely for God; to consecrate ourselves, our households, our property, to Him; to submit to the gospel discipline of this church, and labor for its peace, purity and usefulness; to exercise and promote Christian fellowship with all sister churches of the common Head; and particularly to make ourselves by prayers, gifts, and service, constant coworkers with Christ toward the great end of human redemption, until His will shall be done in earth as it is in Heaven. *Amen.*

#### FORM NO. 3.

*Form of a Church-member's letter of request for Dismission, for the purpose of uniting with others in the formation of a new Church.*

To the \_\_\_\_\_ Church in \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Brethren:

Whereas the Providence of God [has led me to this place, and]

seems to make it my duty to join with other Christians here in the formation of a Congregational Church; this is to request you to give me such a letter of dismission and recommendation as may be suitable in these circumstances.

With Christian salutations,

Your brother in the Lord,

A—— B——.

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 4.

*Form of a Church's Letter of Dismission in answer to the above request.*

To the Ecclesiastical Council to be convened in ——, for the formation (if judged expedient) of a Congregational Church there.

Dear Brethren :

Whereas A—— B—— is a member of this church in good and regular standing, and has requested a letter of dismission and recommendation, for the purpose of uniting with other Christians in forming a new Congregational Church in —— ; let this certify that the Church has voted to grant his request. And should your venerable body advise the formation of such a Church, and recognize him and his associates as constituting the same, his particular relation to us will be at an end.

By vote of the Church,

[Signature of Pastor or Clerk.]

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 5.

*Form of Letter-Missive requesting the presence of a Council for the formation of a Congregational Church.*

To the Congregational Church of Christ in ——.

Dear Brethren :

The Great Head of the Church having inclined a number of believers here to think it their duty to become associated as a Congregational Church, they respectfully request you, by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, to meet in Ecclesiastical Council at —— in this place, on the —— of ——, at —— o'clock

in the ——, to consider the expediency of the course proposed by them, and advise in reference thereto; and should the formation of such a Church be deemed expedient, to assist in the public services appropriate to its formation and recognition as a Congregational Church.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We subscribe ourselves,

Your brethren in Christ,

	}	Committee of those proposing to become a Church.
—————		
—————		
—————		

[Date and Place.]

N. B. The churches invited to sit in this Council are the following, viz.:

Congregational Church in ——. Rev. Mr. ——, Pastor.

“ “ “ ——. “ “ ——, “ etc.

[Name them all.]

#### FORM NO. 6.

##### *Order of public service usual at the Formation of a Church.*

1. Brief preliminary Statement from the Moderator, followed by the reading of the Result of Council by its Scribe.
2. Invocation, and Reading a few passages of appropriate Scripture.
3. Singing.
4. Sermon.
5. Singing.
6. Reading of Articles of Faith and Covenant; and constitution of the church, by their assent, all rising, to the same.
7. Prayer of Recognition, Consecration and Fellowship [usually by the Moderator, or the eldest member of the Council].
8. Right Hand of Fellowship to the new Church.
9. Address to the new Church. [May be omitted.]
10. Singing.
11. Concluding Prayer and Benediction.

## FORM NO. 7.

*Form suitable for the Result of a Council called to fellowship the organization of a Church.*

A number of Christian believers resident in ——, having become persuaded that it is God's will for them to associate as a Congregational Church, and having agreed together for such a purpose, and requested neighboring Congregational Churches to examine their condition and procedure, and advise them in the premises ; by virtue of letters-missive from them, an Ecclesiastical Council was assembled at ——, in ——, on the —— of —— at —— o'clock, ——, which was composed of the following delegates of the following churches, viz. :

[Name all the churches, either in alphabetical order, or by seniority of formation, with their clerical and lay representatives.]

The Council organized itself by the choice of —— Moderator, —— Scribe [and —— Assistant Scribe], and was opened with prayer by the Moderator.

A full statement of the facts in the case was then made, with the reasons which have led these brethren and sisters to desire and propose this union as a church ; and the Council, either by letters of dismission and recommendation, or by personal examination, satisfied itself of the fitness of these parties for such union, and of the fact that the Great Head of the Church seems clearly to call them to such a work in this place. The Articles of Faith and Covenant by them presented as the basis of their organization were also carefully examined and approved by the Council.

After which the Council, being by themselves, voted to advise the parties calling them to go forward in the work to which they have set their hands, and to extend to them, in so doing, the fellowship of the Churches which it represents.

[State arrangements made for the public service of recognition, etc., with the minute of their due performance.]

[Signatures of Officers of Council.]

## FORM NO. 8.

*Forming an Ecclesiastical Society.*

In some States "Articles of Association" must be signed, and

public notice given and filed with the town, city or county clerk. In these some person must be named as empowered to call the first meeting of the Society, and that meeting must rigidly be conformed thereto. The following illustrate such Articles of Association.

---

The undersigned, all of ——, in the County of ——, in the Commonwealth of ——, do hereby associate ourselves together, under the name of the “—— Congregational Society,” as a Parish, or Religious Society, at said ——; and the purposes for which this corporation is established are the support of the public worship of God, and the promotion of Christian knowledge and charity, according to the general usages of the Congregational Churches and Parishes of this Commonwealth.

Mr. —— —— is authorized to call the first meeting of this corporation.

[Date.]

(Signed)

—————  
—————

—————  
—————

—————  
————— etc., etc.

#### FORM NO. 9.

*Form of Rules for Joint Action of the —— Congregational Church  
and —— Congregational Society.*

##### I.

Whenever the —— Church and Society shall be destitute of a settled Pastor and a new one is to be obtained, a joint Committee of the Church and Society, consisting of seven persons, of whom four shall be chosen by the Church and three by the Society, shall provide a supply for the pulpit, and take all necessary measures to that end. The Church shall have the right, in all cases, to select a Pastor (or Colleague Pastor, when it may be deemed expedient by the Church and Society to settle a Colleague Pastor), to be proposed to the Society for its concurrence. If said Society shall concur in said selection with the Church, a call shall be given by the Church and Society jointly, to the person selected; but if the Society do not concur in the selection, the Church shall select again, and so again, from time to time, until the Church and

Society shall agree in a choice, and when so agreed, a call shall be given to the person so chosen, by the Church and Society as stated above; that is, jointly. It is herein agreed that no Committee of Supply of the pulpit shall ever have the power to contract with any minister to occupy the pulpit as "stated supply" or "acting pastor"—and no minister shall so occupy it—for *a period longer than three months*, without special instruction to that effect by both Church and Society at meetings legally called for that purpose.

## II.

The amount of salary to be given to the Pastor shall be fixed by the Society.

## III.

Temporary supply of the pulpit, during the absence or sickness of the Pastor, shall be provided by the Pastor and Deacons of the Church, and the bills of necessary expenses incurred for that purpose shall be submitted to the Prudential Committee of the Society, and, when approved by them, shall be paid by the Treasurer. By the word "Church," hereinbefore used, is meant all male members of the Church in good and regular standing, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards.

## IV.

A Committee to regulate the matter of singing, and of Church music, shall be appointed jointly by the Church and Society (annually), three persons by the former, and two by the latter.

## V.

No alteration shall be made in these rules, on the part of either Church or Society, unless the same be agreed to by two thirds of the members of each, present at legal meetings, seasonable notice of such proposed alteration having been previously given.

## FORM NO. 10.

*A form of Call to a candidate to become Pastor.*

Rev. [or Mr.] A—— B——.

Dear brother :

The undersigned, on behalf of the Congregational Church of

Christ in A—— [and the Ecclesiastical Society connected therewith] beg leave respectfully to submit to your consideration the following certified copies of recent votes of that Church [and Society].

At a regularly called meeting of the Congregational Church in A——, on the —— day of ——, it was unanimously [or state the condition of the vote]

*Voted*, That the Rev. [or Mr.] A—— B—— be invited to become the Pastor and Teacher of this Church.

*Voted*, That Brethren A—— B——, C—— D——, and E—— F——, be a committee to communicate these votes to Rev. [or Mr.] A—— B——; to urge him to comply with the request which they contain, and to make all arrangements which may become necessary to carry out the wishes of the Church in the premises.

A true copy of record.

(Signed) —————, Moderator.

[Date.] —————, Clerk.

[At a legal meeting of the Ecclesiastical Society connected with the Congregational Church in A——, on the —— day of ——, it was unanimously [or state the condition of the vote]

*Voted*, That this Society concur with the Church in requesting the Rev. [or Mr.] A—— B—— to become the Minister of this people.

*Voted*, That should he accept our joint invitation, this Society will pay him an annual salary of —— dollars in quarterly instalments, on the first days of January, April, July, and October, in each year, so long as the relation shall continue.

*Voted*, That should this invitation be accepted, the Pastor be entitled to an annual vacation of —— weeks, during which this Society, under direction of the Deacons of the Church, will supply the pulpit.

*Voted*, That Messrs. G—— H—— and I—— J—— be a committee to act with the committee of the Church, in all procedures made necessary by the above votes.

A true copy of record.

(Signed) —————, Moderator.

—————, Clerk.]

Allow us, dear sir, to add to the invitation conveyed in these votes, the expression of our earnest hope that you will be able to see clearly that it is the desire of the Great Head of the Church that you accept this call, and will name an early day for the ordination [installation] service.

With Christian salutations,

Yours in the Gospel,

A ———	B ———	}
C ———	D ———	
E ———	F ———	
G ———	H ———	
I ———	J ———	

Committee of  
Church [and  
Society.]

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 11.

*Form of Letter-Missive for a Council to Ordain [or Install] a Pastor.*

The Congregational Church [and Society] in A ———, to the Congregational Church in B ———, sendeth greeting.

Dear Brethren :

The Great Head of the Church has kindly united us, and the Congregation stately worshiping with us, in the choice of Rev. [Mr.] A ——— B ——— to be our Pastor and Teacher, and he has accepted our invitation to that office. We, therefore, affectionately request your attendance by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, at ———, on the ——— day of ——— next, at ——— o'clock in the ———, to examine the candidate, review our proceedings, and advise us in reference to the same; and, if judged expedient, to assist in the Installation [Ordination] service.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are fraternally yours,

—————	}
—————	
—————	

Committee  
of the  
Church.

[—————]	}
—————	

Committee of  
the Society.]

[Date and Place.]

The other Churches invited to this Council are as follows:

[Name them all.]

[It is proper to append to those letters sent to Churches whose Pastors are desired to take part in the public service, a postscript, making mention of that fact, that such Pastors may have suitable time for preparation.]

### FORM NO. 12.

#### *Form of Result of an Ordaining [or Installing] Council.*

Pursuant to Letters-Missive, an Ecclesiastical Council assembled at \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock, \_\_\_\_\_, on request of the Congregational Church and Society in \_\_\_\_\_, for the purpose of examining Mr. [or Rev.] A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_, whom they have invited to become their Pastor; and, if judged expedient, of ordaining [installing] him as such. The Council was composed of ministerial and lay delegates of the following churches, as follows, to wit:

[Name them all.]

Organization was effected by the choice of \_\_\_\_\_ Moderator, \_\_\_\_\_ Scribe [and \_\_\_\_\_ Assistant Scribe], and prayer was offered by the Moderator.

The papers covering the proceedings between the parties, thus far, were read, and found to be regular and satisfactory. The candidate presented ample testimonials of Congregational church standing, and of suitable training for the work on which he proposes to enter; and, on examination, was found to give good evidence of personal godliness, of intellectual and scholarly abilities, and of soundness in the faith once delivered to the saints, as our Congregational Churches are accustomed to count soundness.

The Council, being by themselves, voted to approve of the choice of the Church, and to coöperate with it in the settlement of Mr. [Rev.] A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_, as its Pastor, by extending to it, and to him, the fellowship of the Churches in that relation.

[State what arrangements were then made for the public service of ordination (or installation), with the minute of their due performance.]

[Signatures of Officers of Council.]

[Date.]

## FORM NO. 13.

*Order of Public Service usual at the Ordination [or Installation] of a Pastor over a Congregational Church.*

1. Brief preliminary statement from the Moderator, followed by the reading of the Result of Council by its Scribe.
2. Invocation, and reading of a few passages of appropriate Scripture.
3. Singing.
4. Sermon.
5. Prayer of Ordination, with laying on of hands [or of Installation, without the laying on of hands, if the candidate have been ordained before].
6. Singing.
7. Charge to the Pastor.
8. Right Hand of Fellowship.
9. Singing.
10. Concluding Prayer.
11. Benediction, by the Pastor.

The “Address to the People,” which was for a time considered well, it is thought better to omit; as apt to repeat, for substance, much contained in other parts, and unduly to prolong the service.

## FORM NO. 14.

*Standing Rules for a Congregational Church.*

1. The Pastor of this Church shall be a member of it, and its standing Moderator. In case it be ever served by a “stated supply” or “acting Pastor,” he may be elected standing Moderator if he become a member of the Church; and in any event, his pulpit service as such “supply,” or “acting Pastor,” shall be construed as consent on his part to submit himself to the discipline of the Church in the same manner as if he were its Pastor, whether he have become a member of it or not.
2. In his absence, or when Church action respecting him is to be taken, or when, for any other reason, it is obviously improper for him to occupy the chair, the Deacon senior in office who is present shall preside, unless three brethren request that a Moderator be chosen by ballot, when it shall be done.

3. The annual meeting of the Church shall be held in the month of ——, on such day as the Pastor and Deacons may appoint.

4. Business may be legally done at the close of any regular Church prayer-meeting. A special business meeting *may* be called at any time, when in the opinion of the Pastor and Deacons it is expedient, and *shall* be called on the written application to the Pastor—or, in his absence, or refusal, to the Deacon senior in office who is on the ground—of seven members. *Male* members of the Church only are entitled to vote upon business before it. *Ten* male members shall constitute a *quorum*.

5. Special business meetings shall always be notified from the desk on the Sabbath; or, in exigencies when greater haste is expedient, by written (or printed) notice served upon every resident member, at his or her usual place of residence, at least two days before the time of meeting.

6. All meetings for business shall be opened, and closed, with prayer.

7. At the annual meeting, the following elections shall be made for the ensuing year—all to serve, during good behavior, until others be regularly chosen to fill their places, viz.:

(1) A Clerk, who shall keep the records of the Church, and who shall present his records of each Church meeting for approval to the Examining Committee, at their meeting next succeeding that Church meeting; whose approval, entered by the chairman on its face, shall validate the record.

(2) An Examining Committee, to consist of the Pastor and Deacons, and so many other members as may be determined at each annual meeting for the year ensuing; who shall examine all applicants for admission to the fellowship of the Church, and present to it a written report of the names of such as they approve—candidates whom they may not approve having the right of appeal to the whole Church. This committee shall also act as a committee of preliminary inquiry in all cases of discipline, and the Church will listen to no such case not presented to it by them, except in the way of appeal from their decision. The Committee at each annual meeting shall present to the Church a careful written report of the condition of the Church, and of the doings

of the Committee, with a list of absent members, and any recommendations of action thought wise for the common advantage.

(3) A Treasurer, who shall usually be one of the board of Deacons—who shall have charge of all Church moneys and contributions for charitable purposes, and make full written report thereof at such annual meeting. This report shall include an exact minute of all Church charities to its needy members, and to the sick and poor members of other churches worshiping with it, made on recommendation of, or by the hands of, the Deacons; but this list shall only be confidentially examined by the Auditor with a view to its accuracy, and shall never be read to the Church, nor in any other way made public.

(4) An Auditor, who shall audit the Treasurer's annual report, and certify as to its correctness. He shall also in general certify that he has carefully examined the confidential list of charities, and—finding cause for such report—is satisfied that the money of the Church in that direction has been wisely and prudently expended.

(5) A Committee of Collections, of so many members as shall be determined at each annual meeting, who shall, under direction of the Church, collect and pay over to the Treasurer such gifts of the Congregation to charitable purposes as may not be raised through the contribution boxes—who shall make to each annual meeting a full report of their doings, and of the amounts they have collected. And the Church will, at each annual meeting, on recommendation of the Examining Committee, decide how many collections shall be annually taken, in what manner they shall be taken, and to what benevolent objects they shall be devoted.

8. The order of business at the annual meeting shall be as follows :

- (1) Prayer.
- (2) Reading the record of the last annual business meeting of the Church.
- (3) Choice of Clerk—by ballot.
- (4) Reports of the Treasurer and Auditor.
- (5) Action thereon.
- (6) Choice of the Treasurer—by ballot.
- (7) Choice of the Auditor—by ballot.

- (8) Report of the Examining Committee.
- (9) Action thereon.
- (10) Fixing the number of the Examining Committee, in addition to the Pastor and Deacons, for the ensuing year.
- (11) Choice of Examining Committee—by ballot.
- (12) Report of the Committee on Collections.
- (13) Action thereon.
- (14) Fixing the number of the Committee on Collections for the ensuing year.
- (15) Choice of Committee on Collections—by nomination from a nominating committee of three, appointed by the chair.
- (16) Unfinished business.
- (17) New business.
- (18) Prayer, and adjournment.

9. Candidates for admission reported by the Examining Committee and accepted by the Church, shall be publicly propounded before the Church and Congregation at least one week previous to their admission.

10. All persons admitted to the Church shall sign its Confession of Faith and Covenant with their full names—in a book to be kept for that purpose.

11. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed on the first Sabbaths of January, March, May, July, September, and November. The form of invitation to the Lord's Table shall be the following, to be extended by the Pastor on behalf of the Church: "All members in good standing in Christian Churches, who are here present, are affectionately invited to unite with us at the table of our common Lord."

12. The regular weekly meeting of the Church for prayer and conference shall be held on \_\_\_\_\_ evening, and the \_\_\_\_\_ evening last preceding such communion season shall be specially employed in devotional preparation for the reception of the Lord's Supper, at the close of which meeting a contribution shall be taken for Church expenses, and for the relief of poor members under the direction of the Deacons.

13. The necessary expenses of all delegations representing the Church in Ecclesiastical Councils which the Church votes to attend, shall be paid by the Treasurer from the funds of the Church;

and such delegates shall make brief report of their doings, and of the action of the Council, at the regular meeting of the Church next following.

14. Members of this Church removing from its neighborhood will be expected to take letters of dismission and recommendation to the Church with which they habitually worship, *within one year* from the time of their change of residence, or to render reasonable excuse for failing to do so.

15. All letters of dismission given by this Church shall be valid for *six months only* from their date; and no member who has received such a letter shall vote in business meetings of the Church, except on surrender of the same.

16. Members of this Church who have habitually absented themselves from its worship and ordinances *for one year*, without rendering satisfactory excuse, shall not vote in business meetings of the Church, so long as such habitual absence continues.

17. When any officer of this Church shall cease stately to worship with us, his office shall be vacated in three months from the time of his departure.

18. When any member of a sister church shall stately worship and commune with this Church for *more than one year* without removing his relation to us, it shall become the duty of the Examining Committee to make formal request that he will become one of us, and to notify the Church of which he is a member of the facts.

19. The Church regards the following as the regular course of procedure in all cases of discipline, viz.:

(1) The brother aggrieved should seek the removal of the offense, by fraternal conference alone with the offender.

(2) Failing in this endeavor, he should take with him, also in a confidential manner, two or three Christian brethren, and, with their mediation and persuasion, strive for Christian satisfaction.

(3) This failing, he should confidentially bring the matter to the notice of the Examining Committee, who shall use their best endeavor to bring about a reconciliation; and who, if this cannot be effected, shall then prefer formal complaint to the Church against the offending brother.

(4) If the Church—after becoming fully satisfied that the pre-

liminary steps of discipline have been duly taken—vote to entertain the complaint, it shall appoint a time for the hearing of the case, and a committee to prosecute the charges; and shall summon the offender to attend at that hearing, and furnish him, at least one week previous to the time appointed, with a full and exact copy of the charges which will be preferred against him, together with the names of the witnesses who will be relied upon for proof.

(5) If, on such hearing, the Church become fully satisfied of the guilt and impenitence of the party accused, it may vote to admonish him publicly, to suspend him for some definite period from the privileges of the Church, or to excommunicate him from its membership; according to the aggravation of the offense, and its judgment of the treatment best adapted to the state of mind and heart in which he seems to be.

(6) No such vote of censure shall be passed, except by the concurrent action of two thirds of the male members present at a meeting regularly called, previous notice having been given that the case will then come up for action.

(7) In case of the suspension or excommunication of any member, public notice shall be given to the Congregation on the next Lord's Day of the fact.

(8) No vote of suspension for an indefinite period, or "until he shall show penitent fitness to be restored to full privilege," or any equivalent, shall ever be passed; and when the definite term for which a member has been suspended shall expire, he shall be considered as having reverted to his full estate of former privilege, unless the Church take further action on his case.

(9) As this Church regards the object of its discipline and censures to be twofold—as much for the restoration of the offender as the justification of the body, it hereby declares its judgment that the act of excommunication [*ex communione*, but not *ex corpore*], while it cuts off its subject from all Church privilege, does not cut him off from any Church duty or from all Church relation—leaving him not no member, but a disfranchised member, of the spiritual body corporate. As such, it will always pray and labor for his return, and it requests those who administer its ordinances always especially to remember any who may be lying under its

censure, at such times as the Church surrounds the Lord's Table. And its Clerk shall keep the names of all from whom it has withdrawn communion upon a special list, and its Examining Committee shall include in each annual report a statement of the number, names, condition, and prospects of all such disfranchised members.

20. No alteration shall be made in these rules, except at a regular meeting of the Church, after notice of the exact nature of the proposed change at a regular meeting at least one week previous, and by vote of three fourths of the male members present. This rule shall not, however, be so construed as to forbid the suspension of any rule *for a single meeting*, provided the Church shall see fit *unanimously* to order such suspension.

#### FORM NO. 15.

*Form of Ordinary Request of a Church Member for a Letter of Dismission to Another Church.*

To the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_.

Dear Brethren :

In the Providence of God I have been led to [remove my residence to this place, and to] feel it to be my duty to transfer my church membership to the \_\_\_\_\_ Congregational Church. I ask you, therefore, to grant me a letter of dismission from our body, and of recommendation to its fellowship.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

I subscribe myself,

Affectionately, your brother in the Lord,

A\_\_\_\_\_B\_\_\_\_\_.

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 16.

*Form of Suitable Letter of Dismission and Recommendation, in response to such a request.*

The Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_ to the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_, sendeth greeting :

Dear Brethren :

The bearer, Brother A\_\_\_\_\_B\_\_\_\_\_, is a member with us in good and regular standing. He has desired a letter of dismission

from us, and of recommendation to your Christian fellowship, and we have granted his request; so that, when received by you, his membership with us will cease.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are yours in the Lord,

By the hand of

C —— D ——, Church Clerk.

[Date and Place.]

N. B. Please to inform us, by a return of the accompanying certificate, or in some other way, of our brother's reception by you.

---

This is to certify that A —— B —— was received a member of the Congregational Church in ——, on the —— of ——, by letter from the Congregational Church in ——.

Attest.

E —— F ——, Church Clerk.

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 17.

*Form of Letter which may be given by the Pastor or Clerk, without special vote of the Church, to a member expecting to be absent for a considerable period.*

To all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

Dear Brethren :

Let this certify that the bearer, A —— B ——, is a member, in good and regular standing, of the Congregational Church in ——; and, as such, is affectionately commended to the Christian fellowship of any Church of Christ with which he may desire to commune, and to the confidence and kind offices of all the people of God.

Witness my hand,

\_\_\_\_\_  
 } Pastor [or Clerk] of  
 } the Congregational  
 } Church in ——.

[Date and Place.]

## FORM NO. 18.

*Form of Complaint [of the Examining Committee] against an Offending Member before a Church, the preliminary steps of discipline having proved ineffectual.*

To the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_.

Dear Brethren :

It has become our painful duty to bring to your notice the offense of a brother, and to ask you to deal with it according to the law of Christ. Having evidence of his guilt, and having failed—in the use of the first steps of the Gospel discipline—to bring him to a better mind, we are compelled, in great sorrow of heart, and with the earnest prayer that the Great Head of the Church may bless this labor to the restoration of our erring brother, to make the following complaint against him :

We charge Brother A —— B —— with being guilty of the sin of ——; and particularly on the —— day of —— last [and at other times]; and of failing to give Christian satisfaction with regard to the same, in violation of his duty as a Christian, and of his covenant vows.

Brothers C —— D —— and E —— F —— [or Messrs. so and so] are witnesses of the subject-matter of this complaint.

We respectfully ask you to entertain this charge, and to proceed to try the same, according to the rules of this Church, and the law of Christ.

Your brethren,

<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	}	Committee [Examining, or of Discipline] of the Congregational Church in ____.
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[Date.]

## FORM NO. 19.

*Form of Request by an Excluded Member to the Church, to unite with him in submitting his case to the review of a Mutual Council.*

To the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_.

Dear Brethren :

You have placed me under your censure, as it seems to me,

in an unjust and unchristian manner. I therefore respectfully request you to unite with me in submitting the case between us to the impartial review of an Ecclesiastical Council, mutually chosen; holding myself ready to coöperate with you to that end, and should such a Council be fairly called, to submit myself to its advice.

I remain, respectfully,

Your censured brother,

A——— B———.

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 20.

*Form of Letter-Missive for calling a Mutual Council to review and advise on a case of Church discipline.*

To the Congregational Church in ——.

Dear Brethren :

In the exercise of its conception of its duty of Gospel discipline, this Church has been sadly led to deprive its offending Brother A——— B——— of his good standing in its membership for the sin of ——, and for his refusal to make Christian satisfaction for the same. Being dissatisfied with the conclusion of the Church, he has requested us to join him in submitting the whole subject to the advice of a Council mutually called for that purpose, and we have voted to comply with his request.

This is, therefore, to desire you to join by your reverend Pastor and a delegate in an Ecclesiastical Council to be held on ——, at —— in ——, at —— o'clock, ——, to review the case, and advise all parties thereon.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are yours, in the bonds of the Gospel,

—————	}	Committee of the Church.
—————		
—————		
—————	}	Aggrieved member.
—————		

[Date.]

[Append the complete list of churches invited.]

## FORM NO. 21.

*Form of Letter-Missive for an Ex parte Council by such an Excluded Member, or Members, when the Church has unreasonably refused a Mutual Council.*

To the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_.

Dear Brethren:

The undersigned, feeling himself [themselves] aggrieved and injured by recent exclusion from the privileges of the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_, and having in a legal, usual, and proper manner earnestly requested it to unite with him [them] in bringing the matter before a Mutual Council, and been—as it seems to him [them]—unreasonably refused; desire[s] to avail himself [themselves] of the privilege offered by Congregational usage to Church members thus situated, by laying his [their] grievances before an *Ex parte* Council, in manner and form, as follows: [Here insert the grievances desired to be laid before the Council.]

In view of these facts, the undersigned earnestly request[s] of your sense of right, and of your Christian sympathy and friendliness, your participation, by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, in such Council, called to meet at \_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_ o'clock in the \_\_\_\_.

Faithfully, your brother [brethren] in the Lord,

[Signature.]

[Date and Place.]

The churches invited to sit in Council are the following :

[Name them all.]

[It should in all cases be remembered that the first duty of an *Ex parte* Council after its organization, is *always* to request the parties to accept it as a Mutual Council; and that only after the refusal of that offer can the way be open for such Council regularly to proceed to further business.]

[It may further be added that the cases must be *very* few in which the following postscript should not be appended here: “The necessary traveling expenses of delegates to this Council will be defrayed by the party calling it.”]

## FORM NO. 22.

*Nature and Form of the Result of a Council [Mutual or Ex parte] called to review and advise as to a case of discipline, or other "root of bitterness," in a Church.*

Should a Mutual Council in such a case find the Church clearly right, and the offender obviously wrong, it should strongly reaffirm the justice of the action taken by the former, and reprove the insubordination of spirit of the latter which unreasonably stands out against it. Should it find blame on both sides, it should clearly and kindly point out the facts, advising each party to conform thereto. Should it find the individual in the right, and the Church in the wrong, it should affectionately exhort the Church to be just and revise its decision. An *Ex parte* Council would not have the right to speak thus freely to the Church which has declined to submit itself to its advice, but must confine itself rather to the subject as related to the party calling it. Should it find him in error and sin, it should deal faithfully with him. Should it find, on the other hand, evidence that the Church has dealt more hardly with him than the law of Christ will warrant, it should commend itself, and him, to every man's conscience by making that fact clear; and if it find no evidence that the accused be worthy of censure, it may courteously express the judgment that the Church ought to, and the hope that it will, see its way clear to reverse its action and justify him. It may further advise other churches, that, in its judgment, they will not be violating the true fellowship of the churches if they treat this censure as unconstitutional and therefore null, and receive the alleged offender to their communion as if in good standing still. *Such a Council has no right to declare the Church action null, nor to assume to dismiss the man to another Church*—although absurdities nearly as great have, within the memory of man, been committed by Councils of a very respectable, but not particularly wise—Congregational-wise—composition.

[*Form of Result.*]

Pursuant to Letters-Missive from the Congregational Church in —— [or, name the exact source of the letters], an Ecclesiastical Council [if *Ex parte*, say so] convened at ——, on ——, for the purpose of [state the object as given in the Letters-Mis-

sive]. The Council was composed of representatives of the churches, as follows:

From the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_,

Rev. \_\_\_\_\_, Pastor.

Bro. \_\_\_\_\_, Delegate.

[In alphabetical order, or by their seniority of formation.]

It was organized by the choice of \_\_\_\_\_, Moderator; \_\_\_\_\_, Scribe; [and \_\_\_\_\_, Assistant Scribe.] Prayer was offered by the Moderator.

[If *Ex-parte*, state that immediately after organization a communication was addressed to that party in interest which had declined to join in the calling of the Council, earnestly requesting it to consent to accept this as a Mutual Council, or to pledge itself, should this Council dissolve, to call a fair Mutual Council at once to consider the case. On receipt of the decided refusal to take either course, it was *voted* that the way is Congregationally open for this Council to go forward to hear and advise upon the case.]

The Council then proceeded to hear the matters upon which its advice is desired.

[Here insert briefly the journal of proceedings, sessions, adjournments, etc., — shorn of all trivial matters, — until the result be reached.]

After the most patient, thorough, and prayerful examination which they have been able to give the matter submitted to them for action, the Council came [unanimously] to the following result :

[Here give, in full, the document finally agreed upon as embodying the advice of Council.]

(Signed)

[By officers of the Council.]

[Date.]

### FORM NO. 23.

*Form of Letter-Missive for the ordinary Dismission of a Pastor.*  
The Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_ to the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_, sendeth greeting.

Dear Brethren :

Whereas, our Pastor, Rev. A \_\_\_\_\_ B \_\_\_\_\_, has tendered the resignation of his office as Pastor of this Church and Minister of

this people], and the Church [and Society] have voted to accept the same, subject to the advice of Council; this is to request your attendance by your reverend Pastor and a delegate at —, in this place, on —, at — o'clock, to examine the facts, and advise us in the premises.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,  
We are yours in the Gospel,

— — — — — Pastor.

Committee of  
the Church [and  
Society].

[Date and Place.]

**The other churches invited to sit in Council are the following : [Name them all.]**

FORM NO. 24.

*Form of Letter-Missive for a Mutual Council to advise as to the  
Dismission of a Pastor when difficulties exist.*

The Congregational Church in —— to the Congregational  
Church in ——, sendeth greeting:

Dear Brethren:

Whereas, unhappily, a state of things exists among us which, in the judgment of a majority of this Church [and of the Ecclesiastical Society connected therewith], renders it expedient that the relation between the Church and its Pastor should be dissolved, we affectionately invite your attendance by your Pastor and a delegate, at \_\_\_\_\_, on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock in the \_\_\_\_\_, to examine the facts, and advise us in the premises.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are yours, in the Gospel,

— — — — — , Pastor.

[Date and Place.]

The other churches invited to sit in Council are the following :  
[Name them all.]

#### FORM NO. 25.

*Form of Letter-Missive for an Ex-parté Council to advise when difficulties exist between a Church and its Pastor, and he has unreasonably refused a Mutual Council.*

Modify No. 24 so as to read as follows :

Whereas, unhappily, a state of things exists among us which, in the judgment of a majority of this Church [and Society] renders it expedient that the relation between us and our Pastor be dissolved, yet he declines to take action for such dissolution; and, as it seems to us unreasonably, refuses to submit the facts to a Mutual Council for advice—although such a Council has been asked for in the legal and usual manner, by the said Church [and Society]—we affectionately invite your attendance upon an *Ex-parté* Council, by your Pastor, etc.

#### FORM NO. 26.

*Form of Result of an ordinary Dismissing Council.*

[The general form may be like what would be suggested on the model of No. 12, modified to meet the case in its preliminaries, with the results of advising dismission, and with some such vital paragraph as the following, to be the retiring Pastor's certificate of good standing, and his credentials to another field of labor.]

In coming to this result the Council are able to declare, with great satisfaction, that they have found nothing, in their investigation of the causes which have led to this dismission, to impair their confidence in the [essential] integrity of the Christian and ministerial character of the retiring Pastor; whom, accordingly, they hereby commend to the confidence of the churches as, in their judgment, an honest, faithful, and useful minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, who carries with him their tender sympathies, and earnest prayers for his future prosperity in the work of the Lord, wherever Providence may assign his labors.

## FORM NO. 27.

*Form of Letter-Missive calling a Mutual Council for the Deposition of a Pastor guilty of Heresy or Immorality.*

[The preliminary steps having been duly taken, as in the case of a private member, and the conclusion reached that, for cause, the Pastor should be deposed; in view of the importance of the subject, and the fact that he was placed in his position by advice of Council, the Church may ask him to join them in procuring the advice of a Mutual Council; and should he refuse, may summon one *Ex parte*. The vital clause of the Letter-Missive in the first case might be as follows:]

This Church having become painfully convinced that its Pastor has forfeited his ministerial character, by [state the cause], and should be deposed; and all preliminary steps having been orderly taken, both parties have agreed to unite in submitting the painful subject to the advice of a Mutual Council; and you are affectionately invited to meet in Council for that purpose, on ——, at ——, etc.

## FORM NO. 28.

*Form for a Council Ex parte for the same purpose.*

Whereas this Church has been sadly led to the conclusion that its Pastor has forfeited his ministerial character, by [state the cause], and should be deposed; and, all preliminary steps having been orderly taken, has requested him to join it in submitting the case to the advice of a Mutual Council, and he has—in its judgment—unreasonably refused; this is to request your attendance, by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, in an *Ex parte* Council, to be held at ——, on ——, for the consideration of the facts, and the giving of such advice as the Great Head of the Church shall direct, in the premises.

## FORM NO. 29.

*Form of Result of Council deposing a Pastor.*

[Extraordinary care should be taken to secure the utmost judicial fullness of hearing and fairness of trial, when, if convinced that no other course remains open, the Council may adopt some such minute as the following:]

Having fully, and in the kindest spirit, endeavored to weigh all the considerations alleged by the Pastor in his own defense [or, having sought from the accused Pastor in vain any sufficient exculpation of himself from the grave charges which appear to have been proved against him], and having implored special divine guidance, this Council feels itself painfully compelled to rest in the judgment that for [name the cause] he is unworthy of the Christian name, and should no longer be suffered to exercise the Christian ministry. They do therefore, in the fear of God, and for the good of souls, hereby advise the Church to depose him from its Pastorate; do publicly withdraw from him the fellowship of the churches which was extended to him in the Council that ordained him; and warn all good people against him as one in whose Christian and ministerial character the churches which they represent have lost confidence, and for whom they decline all further responsibility.

#### FORM NO. 30.

*Form of a Letter of Admonition to a Church which appears to be in Error in Doctrine or Practice.*

The following may suggest what might be appropriate in such a case:

The Congregational Church in —— to the Congregational Church in ——, sendeth greeting:

Dearly Beloved:

Evidence which appears to be abundant and conclusive has reached us, by which we are sorrowfully persuaded that you deliberately receive and maintain doctrines which subvert the foundations of the Christian faith, to wit: [insert the briefest possible clear statement of the same]; [or that you willfully tolerate and uphold a notorious scandal, to wit: etc.]; [or that you persistently disregard and contemn the communion of churches, in manner and form, as follows: etc.]

We earnestly beseech you, dear brethren, to review this matter most prayerfully, in the light of God's word; and we affectionately, yet solemnly, testify to you that, in our judgment, in this thing you are in error in faith and practice, and in danger of hearing from Him who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand and

Walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, the admonition : "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." In His name, therefore, and on His behalf, we, your brethren, aggrieved by your acts and position, affectionately admonish you to remember from whence ye are fallen and repent, and do the first works, lest the Master come to you and remove our candlestick out of his place except ye repent.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are your brethren in Christ.

Signed, by special vote, by

\_\_\_\_\_, Pastor.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ } Officers.

[Date and Place.]

#### FORM NO. 31.

*Form of Letter-Missive calling a Council to consider the case of an Erring Church which neglects the Admonition of a Sister Church.*

The Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_ to the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_, sendeth greeting :

Dear Brethren :

We have for some time been deeply grieved by the fact that our sister church, the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_, appears deliberately to have received and to maintain doctrines which seem to us subversive of the foundations of the Christian faith [or name other grievances, as contemplated in the Platform]. Acting upon our Christian liberty, and incited thereto by our deep sense of responsibility for the public fellowship which, in common with other Congregational churches, we hold with them, and by our solicitude for the general cause of Christ, we addressed to them, on the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ last, a fraternal admonition. Failing satisfactory response, and thoroughly convinced that the best interests of all demand further action, we do now affectionately

invite you to assemble, with other sister churches, in Council, at \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_, etc., to consider the facts in the case, and decide whether it be not the duty of such a Council to admonish more gravely and formally that Church, and, failing to bring it to penitence, to advise the churches of the Congregational fellowship to withhold from the \_\_\_\_\_ Church all acts of church communion till it shall give evidence of reformation.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

We are, etc.

[Name all the churches invited to sit in Council.]

#### FORM NO. 32.

*Form of Result of such a Council, advising the withdrawal of Fellowship from an apostate Congregational Church.*

[Such a Council having assembled, and with patient kindness vainly sought, by formal admonition and such other fraternal labor as seemed wise, for satisfaction from the church which has given offense, with the result of being driven to the conclusion that the said church is not now in reality a Congregational Church, and ought no longer to be fellowshipped as such, might phrase its Result properly thus:]

We hereby declare, first of all to the churches whose immediate representatives we are, and by whose commission we entered on this investigation, and secondly to the entire body of Congregational churches which we indirectly represent, that we find the

\_\_\_\_\_ Church, after all our fraternal labor, to persist in [here name the ground, or grounds, of offense]; and—while cheerfully recognizing the right of that Church, should it resume its independency, to manage its affairs according to its own sense of right, without interference from without—we judge it a thing inconsistent and intolerable that, in virtue of the Congregational fellowship formerly given it, it should now make Congregationalism responsible for that with which, as it seems to us, it has, and properly can have, no sympathy. We do therefore advise the churches which we represent, and all Congregational churches with whom our judgment may have influence, by special vote to withhold from that erring Church in \_\_\_\_\_ all acts of communion, till it shall give evidence of reformation.

## FORM NO. 33.

*Form of Letter-Missive for a Council to advise with reference to the Dissolution of a Congregational Church.*

[Adapt to the ordinary form of calling a Council the following clause as defining its object:]

Whereas, in the Providence of God, the members [or a majority of the members] of the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_ have been led to conclude that the best good of the cause of Christ would be promoted by the dissolution of this Church as a separate organization, and the association of its members with other church organizations; and whereas, having been originally formed on the concurrent advice of the Congregational churches of the neighborhood, it is fitting that their counsel be taken before it be disbanded, this is affectionately to request your attendance, by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, at \_\_\_\_\_, on \_\_\_\_\_, etc., to consider the facts and advise us in these premises, etc.

## FORM NO. 34.

*Result of such a Council, advising the Disbandment of a Church.*

The usual course has been, the Council favoring the disbanding, to recommend the Church to vote to dissolve, and advise it to give authority to its Clerk [or a special committee] to grant to all its members letters of dismissal to other churches, after limiting the time during which they must be taken, and used.

## FORM NO. 35.

*Form of Letter suitable to be given by the Clerk [or committee] of a Church to its Members when it has voted to dissolve.*

To the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_.

Greeting:

Whereas the Providence of God has made it necessary—in the judgment of its members—for the Congregational Church in \_\_\_\_\_ to cease to exist; and whereas, after advice of Council, it has unanimously voted that its existence, as a separate branch of Christ's body, shall cease, whenever its members shall all have been received into the fellowship of those churches to which they are respectively commended, as in good and regular standing; this

is to certify you that the bearer, Brother [or Sister] ——, is thus commended to your Christian care and fellowship.

(Signed)

[Clerk, or Committee.]

[Date.]

 Kindly notify the Clerk [or Committee] above named, when you shall have received the member [or members] herein referred to, to your fellowship.

#### FORM NO. 36.

*Form of Letter-Missive for Advice toward the general Adjustment of Difficulties existing in a Church.*

The Congregational Church in —— to the Congregational Church in ——, sendeth greeting.

Dear Brethren :

Difficulties having arisen between the Pastor and some of the members of this Church [or between various members of this Church], for the wise and Christian adjustment of which we desire your Christian counsel; this is to request your attendance, by your reverend Pastor and a delegate, at ——, on the —— of ——, at —— o'clock in the ——, to advise us on the following points, viz. :

[Here state every material question on which light is desired.]

And such other incidental matters as may inseparably belong to these main difficulties which unhappily exist among us, and for whose healing we invite your help.

Wishing you grace, mercy, and peace,

[Date and Place.] [Name the churches called, etc.]

#### FORM NO. 37.

*Rules for an Association of Ministers, adopted in 1761 in the Old Colony in Massachusetts, and very good for the uses of the present day. [From Orig. MSS. in Cong. Lib., Boston.]*

We do now solemnly form ourselves into a *Religious Association*—after ye laudable practice formerly used by ye Body of ye Ministers in this county—and severally agree and determine by ye will of God to associate ourselves together four times in

ye compass of a year, viz: The 1 Wednesday in Feby.: ye 1 Wednesday in May, ye 1 Wednesday in August, and ye 1 Wednesday in November, with a view to promote Religion in ourselves & among our People; & we agree that ye Association shall be under ye following Regulations, in general:

1. We will endeauor to order ye Buisness of our families & of our particular callings in such a manner before hand as that we may attend ye Association at ye time & place appointed, with as little Inconveniency as may be.

2. At each meeting we will choose a Moderator & also a Scribe to keep the minutes of ye Transactions of ye Association.

3. In as much as ye revival of Religion depends upon ye outpourings & gracious Influences of ye Spirit of God, for which He hath said yt He will be enquir'd of by ye house of Israel, therefore we will (if other nessary Buisness dont prevent) spend a very Considerable part of our time in prayer therefor.

4. We will have at least one publick Sermon preach'd for ye Benefit of ye people in ye Town where we shall meet, by such of our Number as we shall nominate.

5. We will consult from time to time what measures we Judge will most Conduce to revive Religion in our selves & among our people, & also assist one another in difficult Cases.

6. If any Candidate for the Ministry shall apply to us for approbation, we will take pains to know & to satisfie ourselves as to his qualifications for ye Sacred Work.

7. We will hear & consider any regular Complaints or Petitions that shall be preferred to us, & give our best advice thereon; not assuming any authoritie, but with a view to promote Christian Purity and Peace.

8. We will endeauour to strengthen the hands, preserve the Reputation & promote ye Usefulness of each other upon all proper occasions; & also use that plainness & faithfulness with one another, which will best tend to keep us watchful & attentive to our Duty; that so we may recomend CHRIST and His holy and benevolent Religion by our *Lives* as well as Doctrine.

*Finally.* We commend ourselves to God & to ye word of His Grace which is able to build us up & to give us an Inheritance among all them that are sanctified. [Signed.]

## FORM NO. 38.

*Form of Approval and Commendation of a Candidate for the Pastorate to the Churches, by an Association of Ministers.*

This may certify that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, having presented himself to the \_\_\_\_\_ Association of Congregational Ministers for inquiry as to his qualifications for the Gospel Ministry; and having been this day carefully examined by us with regard to the same; and having satisfied us of his good and regular standing in the Christian Church, of his reputable and faithful personal character, his sufficient literary and theological attainments, the purity of his motives in entering the ministry, and the reasonable probability, with God's blessing, of his success therein; is hereby approved by us, and commended to the Congregational Churches, as one whom we believe to be fitted by character, talents and attainments for the sacred office.

In testimony whereof we have directed this certificate of probation to be signed by our Moderator and Scribe; with the understanding that, unless revoked for cause, it will be valid for one year from the date thereof.

\_\_\_\_\_, Moderator.  
\_\_\_\_\_, Scribe.

[Date and Place.]

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE LITERATURE OF CONGREGATIONALISM.

HE one book of Congregationalism is the Bible. But many other books have been written for, and have borne an important part in, the development of its principles, the discussion of its methods, the record of its precedents, and the exposition of its advantages. I have elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> with some care and at some length, endeavored to make such record as I could of the literature thus created. I do not now propose to go over the same ground. But it has occurred to me that now and then a reader of this *Hand-Book* may like to be directed to such sources of further information as are easily accessible. I accordingly devote a little space here to the list of a few important volumes which are presumably within easy reach of most into whose hands this manual may fall. Most, I am sorry to say, are out of print. A few may be had of the Congregational Publishing Society, of this city, postage paid, at the price named, and some of almost any antiquarian bookseller; while all may be consulted in the Congregational Library, Boston, and without doubt in many — perhaps most — other large collections of religious books. I arrange the list in the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years, as seen in its Literature, etc., with a Bibliographical Appendix.* New York: Harper & Bros. 1880.

chronological order in which the treatises were first written, as, on the whole, most suggestive and convenient; although the editions in which they are now accessible in many cases may be recent. Full titles are not given—only enough for exact identification.

#### LIST OF PRINCIPAL BOOKS RELATING TO CONGREGATIONALISM:

(Purchasable, or easily consultable.)

- 1610-1634. JOHN ROBINSON, Works of, with a Memoir and Annotations by J. Ashton. Boston: Congregational Publishing Society (1851). 16°. 3 vols.
- 1643-1689. JOHN OWEN. Various treatises to be seen in his *Works*. [repr. New York: R. Carter & Bros. (1851).] 8°.
- 1644. JOHN COTTON. The Keyes of the Kingdom of Heaven and Power thereof, etc. London. 4°. [repr. Boston (1852). 12°.]
- 1645. A Brief Narration of the Practices of the Churches in New England, etc. London. 4°. [repr. *Cong. Quarterly*, xvii: 253-271.]
- 1647. W. BARTLET. *Ichnographia*, or a Modell of the Primitive Congregational Way, etc. London. 4°.
- 1648. THOMAS HOOKER. A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline, etc. London. 4°.
- 1649. The Cambridge Platform, etc. London. 4°. [repr. (1855), Congregational Publishing Society.]
- 1658. The Savoy Declaration, etc. London. 4°. [repr. *Cong. Quarterly*, viii: 241-267.]
- 1672. JOHN DAVENPORT. The Power of Congregational Churches asserted and vindicated. London. 12°.
- 1702. COTTON MATHER. *Magnalia Christi Americana*; or the Ecclesiastical History of New England. London. folio. [last repr. Hartford. 1853. 8°. 2 vols.]
- 1710. The Saybrook Platform. [repr. several times, but out of print.]

- 1710-1717. JOHN WISE. *The Churches Quarrel Espoused, etc., etc.* [repr. by Congregational Publishing Society. 1860.] \$1.00.
1726. COTTON MATHER. *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Nov-Anglorum.* A faithful account of the Discipline Professed and Practised in the Churches of New England, etc. London. 12°.
1738. SAMUEL MATHER. An Apology for the Liberties of the Churches in New England, etc. London. 8°.
1773. Observations upon the Congregational Plan of Church Government, etc., by the Mass. Convention of Ministers. Boston. 8°.
1794. [E. CHAPLIN.] Congregationalism as contained in the Scriptures, explained by the Cambridge Platform, etc. 8°.
1829. THOMAS C. UPHAM. *Ratio Disciplinae*, or the Constitution of the Congregational Churches, examined and deduced from early Congregational writers, and other Ecclesiastical Authorities, etc. Portland. 12°. [repr. 1844. Portland.]
1839. LEONARD BACON. Thirteen Historical Discourses, on the completion of Two Hundred years from the beginning of the First Church in New Haven, etc. New Haven. 8°.
- 1839-1844. BENJAMIN HANBURY. Historical Memorials Relating to the Independents, or Congregationalists, etc. London, 8°. 3 vols.
1840. GEORGE PUNCHARD. A View of Congregationalism, etc. Salem. [repr. 1856. Boston. 12°.] \$1.00.
1841. JOHN LEBOQUET. The Congregational Manual; or a concise Exposition of the Belief, Government and Usages of the Congregational Churches. Boston. 12°.
1841. GEORGE PUNCHARD. History of Congregationalism, from about A.D. 250 to 1629. [repr. greatly enlarged, Boston, 1865.] 3 vols. \$2.00 a vol.
1841. ROBERT VAUGHAN. Congregationalism: or, the Polity of Independent Churches, viewed in relation to the State and Tendencies of modern Society, etc. London. [repr. enlarged, 1842. 12°.]

1844. [E. R. TYLER.] *The Congregational Catechism, etc.* New Haven. 12°.
1844. LYMAN COLEMAN. *The Apostolical and Primitive Church, Popular in its Government, and Simple in its worship, etc.* Boston. 12°. [repr. 1869, Philadelphia.]
1845. JOHN KEEF. *Congregationalism and Church action : with the Principles of Christian Union, etc.* New York. 8°.
1848. ENOCH POND. *A Manual of Congregationalism, Prepared for the General Conference of the Congregational Churches of Maine, etc.* Portland. 12°. [agn. revised, Bangor, 1859. 12°.]
1848. SAMUEL DAVIDSON. *The Ecclesiastical Polity of the New Testament unfolded, etc.* London. 8°.
1850. *Manual of Church Polity, Prepared by a Committee of the General Congregational Association of Iowa.* Burlington. 12°.
1852. PRESTON CUMMINGS. *A Dictionary of Congregational Usages and Principles, etc.* Boston. 12°. [agn. 1854, enlarged.]
- 1854-59. *The Year-Book of the American Congregational Union.* New York. 8°. 6 vols.
- 1855-62. JOSEPH B. FELT. *The Ecclesiastical History of New England, etc.* Boston. 8°. 2 vols. \$2.00 a vol.
1857. WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE. *Annals of the American Pulpit, etc.* [vols. 1 and 2 relate to Congregational ministers.] New York. 8°.
1857. JOSHUA W. WELLMAN. *The Church Polity of the Pilgrims, etc.* Boston. 12°. 50c.
1858. JOSEPH S. CLARK. *A Historical Sketch of the Congregational Churches in Massachusetts, from 1620 to 1858.* Boston. 12°. \$1.00.
1858. H. F. UHDEN. *The New England Theocracy. A History of the Congregationalists in New England to the Revivals of 1740, etc.* Boston. 12°.

- 1859-78. *The Congregational Quarterly.* Boston. 8°. 20 vols.
1861. Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Connecticut, prepared under direction of the General Association, to commemorate the completion of one hundred and fifty years from its first assembling. New Haven. 8°.
1861. DANIEL A. WHITE. *New England Congregationalism in its Origin and Purity: illustrated by the Foundation and Early Records of the First Church in Salem, etc.* Salem. 8°.
1864. R. WARDLAW. *Congregational Independency in Contradistinction to Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, the Church Polity of the New Testament, etc.* Glasgow and Toronto. 16°.
1865. WOODBURY DAVIS. *Congregational Polity, Usages and Law.* Boston. 8°.
1865. MOSES H. WILDER. *The Congregational Polity as taught in the Word of God, and gathered from the approved usages of the Congregational Churches, etc.* Rochester. 12°.
1865. Contributions to the Ecclesiastical History of Essex County, Mass. Prepared and published under direction of the Essex North Association. Boston. 8°.
1865. EDWARD BUCK. *Massachusetts Ecclesiastical Law.* Boston. 12°. [revised ed.] \$1.50.
1865. HENRY M. DEXTER. *Congregationalism: What it is; Whence it is; How it Works; Why it is better than any other form of Church government, and its consequent demands.* Boston. 12°. [5th edition enlarged, 1879.] \$1.50.
1866. Debates and Proceedings of the National Council of Congregational Churches, held at Boston, 1865. Boston. 8°.
1869. JOSEPH E. ROY. *A Manual of the Principles, Doctrines, and Usages of the Congregational Churches.* Chicago. 12°. [An admirable brief manual, many times reprinted.]
1871. DORUS CLARKE. *Orthodox Congregationalism and the Sects.* Boston. 8°. 50c.
1872. *The Boston Platform (of 1865).* Boston. 16°. 50c.

1874. KINSLEY TWINING. The Growth and Sources of Congregational Law. A Paper read at the Rhode Island Conference, and published in the *Providence Journal*, 13 June, 1874.
1874. LEONARD BACON. The Genesis of the New England Churches. New York. 16°. \$2.50.
1874. A. HASTINGS ROSS. Ohio Manual for Congregational Churches. [Prepared for, and commended by the Ohio Congregational Conference.] Toledo. 16°.
1875. HENRY A. HAZEN. The Congregational and Presbyterian Ministry and Churches of New Hampshire. Boston. 8°. \$1.10.
1876. CHRISTOPHER CUSHING. What Congregationalism has accomplished during the past century. Boston. 8°. [*Cong. Quarterly*, October, 1876.]
1877. CHRISTOPHER CUSHING. Ought Congregational Churches to dispense with public assent to their creeds, as a prerequisite to membership? Boston. 8°. [*Cong. Quarterly*, April, 1877.]
1878. WILLIAM W. PATTON. The Last Century of Congregationalism; or the Influence on Church and State of the Faith and Polity of our Pilgrim Fathers. Washington. 8°.
1878. HENRY A. HAZEN. The Pastors of New Hampshire, Congregational and Presbyterian. A Chronological Table of the Beginning and Ending of their Pastorates, etc. Bristol. 8°. 50c.
- 1879-80. [A. H. QUINT AND H. M. DEXTER.] The Congregational Year-Book. [Containing the Statistics of the Congregational Churches of the United States.] Boston. 8°. 75c.
1880. HENRY M. DEXTER. The Congregationalism of the Last Three Hundred Years, as seen in its Literature; with special reference to certain recondite, neglected, or disputed passages, etc. With a Bibliographical Appendix. New York. 8°. \$6.00.
1880. GEORGE PUNCHARD. Congregationalism in America from 1629 to 1879. In continuation of the History of Congregationalism from A.D. 250. Boston. 12°. 2 vols. \$2.00 a vol. [in press.]

## CHAPTER X.

### THE RULES OF ORDER USED IN CONGREGATIONALISM.

**A**S Congregationalism is distinguished from the other polities by the prominence which it gives to the local congregation of believers, and as the largest part of its business is done in such *ἐκκλησιαι* [*ekklēsiai*], or in ecclesiastical councils, or conventions, conferences, or other assemblies of the people—which, for the wisest and best results, require to be controlled and guided to their issues by the most prudent and sagacious methods which the experience of men meeting in masses for debate and action has developed; it follows that the subject of Rules of Order becomes one of special practical importance to Congregational ministers. They are always liable *ex officio* to be called to preside over discussion ultimating in action. It is scarcely less so to Congregational laymen, who, to the end that our church debates may be seemly and profitable, and our church action discreet, honorable and Scriptural, should be:

“Men who their duties know,  
But know their rights, and, knowing, dare maintain.”

The following rules are founded upon those in common use in secular assemblies, always modified by careful consideration of the peculiarities of ecclesiastical

action,<sup>1</sup> and restricted to its comparatively simple (usual) necessities.

### RULES OF ORDER.

**I. GETTING RIGHTLY STARTED.** (1) *Moderator.* The first question is whether the body have any standing rules. If so, organization should be effected in careful obedience to their direction. In a church, the pastor or deacon senior in office present, according to the rule, should take the chair. In a Council some pastor—often the eldest—usually calls to order, reads the Letter-Missive, inquires whether a quorum be present, asks for a nomination or ballot for Moderator, declares his election, and directs him to the chair. In any meeting which is not one of an organized body, some person—usually one of the elder and better known members—rises and says: “Please to come to order: I move that Mr. —— preside over this meeting. Is that motion seconded?” Some one responds: “I second the motion.” The first then continues: “It has been moved and seconded that Mr. —— preside over this meeting: so many of you as are in favor of the motion will signify it by saying ‘Aye.’” After a pause he continues: “So many of you as are opposed to the motion will say ‘No.’” He will then declare the result: “The ‘ayes’ have it, and Mr. —— will take the chair.” Or should the “nays” have it, he will call for another nomination, and proceed as before, until some one be chosen.

The business of the Moderator is to enforce decorum, to entertain and put motions, to decide questions of order, announce votes, and, in general, help the assembly to do in a rapid and clean manner its proper work, while preserving it from maundering, irrelevancy and confusion.

(2) *Clerk.* The second essential, after a Moderator to order business, is a registering officer to keep record of it. Where the standing rules, or the existing organization, provide a Clerk, it should be noted whether he be present, and, if not, a Clerk *pro*

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<sup>1</sup> Cushing's *Manual of Parliamentary Debate* and Robert's *Rules of Order* have been specially referred to on doubtful points.

*tempore* should be elected. In a Council, the Scribe is usually selected from the younger ministerial members of the body.

(3) *Committee of Business.* In a sporadic convention it often happens that a committee to prepare and mature business, or—where the special object of the assembly is to concentrate and express public opinion upon some topic of special moment—to present resolutions for discussion, is one of the earliest needs. In such a case it is suitable that one of the acts really included in organization be the appointment of such a committee—on nomination from the chair, or of a committee specially designated to select and present their names.

2. MOTIONS. Every item of business must take the form of a brief distinct proposition—technically called a “motion.” So that whoever desires to bring any thought, desire, or proposal before an assembly, must do it in this form. The first requisite is to “obtain the floor,” that is, to secure the attention of the Moderator, and, by his coöperation, the listening of the body. The person wishing to “make a motion” therefore rises and says: “Mr. Moderator,” [or Chairman, or whatever the title may be]. If the presiding officer catch his eye, and recognize his right to the floor, he will respond by announcing the member’s name. Should some one else—or several others—have arisen at the same time, the Moderator decides which of them is entitled to the floor. Having obtained the floor, the member may proceed to state what it is for which he desires the notice and action of the body. Any member has a right to make any motion—not in itself absurd or against the rules. But, to save time from being wasted upon foolish and impertinent propositions, it is always required that every motion be *seconded*—thus receiving the indorsement of *two* responsible parties—before it can claim discussion and decision.

Having made his motion, and some one having seconded the same, the mover will naturally proceed to set forth such reasons as make him think the course he proposes ought to be taken. Others may follow, supporting or controverting his view. The Moderator must require each to confine what he says to the specific question awaiting decision in that motion, and must call to order, at once, on any violation of courtesy. When all who desire to argue the question, or to express their preferences with regard to it, have concluded, the Moderator will put the question, in some

form like this : "Gentlemen : It has been moved by Mr. —— and seconded by Mr. —— that [such and such things be done]. Are you ready for the question upon that motion ? So many as are in favor of that motion will say 'Aye.'" When he has roughly estimated the number thus voting [in important cases he will direct the Clerk to aid him in the duty] he goes on : "So many as are opposed to this motion will say 'No.'" Then—if the matter be instantly clear [or waiting for the Clerk to report, should the count be close] he announces the result : "The 'ayes' ['nays'] have it, and the motion is carried" [or lost]. Should the vote be doubted, the Moderator must put it again, which he would usually do thus : "Gentlemen, the vote is doubted. So many of you as are in favor of the motion [which should be clearly restated] will rise and stand until they are counted." Usually he and the Clerk each then makes separate count. Then : "So many as are opposed to the motion will rise and stand until they are counted." The result is then declared, after comparison of the Moderator's count with that of the Clerk. Unless cut off by the previous question, a question is still open to debate—even after the affirmative vote has been taken, provided the negative has not been put. But if debate be thus renewed, the affirmative must be put over again after discussion has once more closed.

Any member always has the right to demand that any motion be reduced to writing by its mover, for more definite understanding. A division of a question capable of division may also always be called for. The Moderator must put all orderly questions to vote, however much he may be personally opposed to them, his only escape being in calling upon the body to appoint a new Moderator and himself retiring from the chair. He—and it makes no difference if he be Moderator *ex officio* as pastor—derives all his power from the body over which he presides, and it is as disorderly for him as it would be for any other individual, to undertake to thwart its will because it may promise not to be agreeable to him.

No new motion can be entertained while one is under debate, except it be in the nature of an amendment to it, or one of the class of privileged motions [see No. 3]; unless the person having the floor voluntarily yield to the suggestion that the consideration of the matter in hand be temporarily suspended and the motion laid on the table, expressly in order to allow some other proposition to

take its place and be instead at that moment brought to the notice of the body.

No speaking is in order that is not (1) by way of introduction to a motion about to be made; (2) upon a motion already made and awaiting action; (3) for the purpose of raising or explaining a point of order [see No. 8]; or (4)—by general consent—to make some pertinent announcement, or explanation.

**3. PRIVILEGED MOTIONS.** These are motions which stand so related to the wisest transaction of business that by common consent they have claim to precedence over other business. These are:

(1) *To fix the time to which adjournment shall take place.* This can always be moved, and is in order even when a simple motion to adjourn has been put to vote and carried, provided that result has not been declared. If it for the moment take the place of another motion before the body, it cannot be debated; but a motion to amend it by altering the time specified would be in order. If no other business be under discussion when it is made, this motion becomes debatable. The form in which it should be put is: "That when we adjourn, we adjourn to meet so and so."

(2) *To adjourn.* The motion to adjourn is always in order except when a member is speaking and will not yield the floor to it; and takes precedence of all others except that just considered. If no motion be before the body when it is moved, it can be amended, and debated, like any other question. But if it be itself made for the purpose of superseding some question under debate, it cannot be amended and becomes undebatable, and unreconsiderable. The form of this question is: "Shall this body now adjourn?"

The effect of the adoption of such a motion in the case of a convention or other body not holding regular sessions from day to day, or week to week, would be the same as dissolution; otherwise it adjourns it to the time of its next regular meeting.

The effect of an adjournment upon the business under discussion in case of a sporadic convention or body not holding regular sessions, is to make that which was under consideration when that adjournment took place the business first in order on reassembling after reading the records of the previous meeting; since an adjourned meeting is legally the former meeting continued. The effect upon business of an adjournment in the case of a church

holding (say) regular monthly business meetings, would be to make the matter under consideration when adjournment took place, first in order at the next regular meeting under the head of “unfinished business,” and before “new business.”

(3) *The Previous Question.* The object of this is to terminate debate and force an immediate vote upon the main question under discussion. It cannot therefore itself be debated or amended. Its form is : “Shall the main question be now put?” and when made and seconded, the Moderator must immediately take a vote upon it. In some assemblies, as in the National House of Representatives, a majority vote is held sufficient; but better usage requires a two-thirds vote for its adoption. If carried, the main question must be put at once.

(4) *The motion to withdraw a motion by its mover.* So soon as a motion has been made, seconded, and stated to the meeting by the presiding officer, it becomes the property of the body, and cannot be withdrawn by the mover—should he change his mind and wish to do so—without unanimous consent. Should he fail to gain this he has the right to move its withdrawal, which motion when seconded will take precedence of the original motion. This motion cannot be debated or amended.

(5) *The motion to suspend the rules.* This is not debatable, amendable, nor reconsiderable, and requires a two-thirds vote for its adoption; and the purpose for which the suspension is asked must be stated. It should be put thus: “Shall the rules of this body which interfere with [name the action proposed] be suspended?”

(6) *The motion to lay on the table.* The object of this is to remove the subject to which it applies from present consideration, yet leave it where at any convenient moment its consideration may be resumed by a vote to take it from the table. It should be put thus: “Shall the question [specify] lie on the table?” And that (unamendable and undebatable) which reverses it, thus: “Shall the question [specify] be taken from the table?” An affirmative vote would replace it in the same position which it lost by going upon the table. The effect of placing a subject upon the table is to carry with it thither whatever inseparably adheres to it. If an amendment, it carries with it the proposition which it was designed to modify. Three exceptions to this only are noted, viz.: (1) When an appeal has been taken from a decision of the

chair, and the appeal goes to the table, it cannot from the nature of the case carry that decision with it, but leaves it as before ; (2) An amendment to the records of the body would not carry those records to the table with it; nor (3) does a motion to reconsider going to the table carry with it that previous action which it proposed to undo. This cannot be debated or amended.

(7) *The motion to commit [or recommit]*, when it goes back to a committee which reported it]. The object of this is, by placing a proposition in the hands of a committee, to obtain more light upon it; perhaps to improve its quality. This may be done with or without instructions. It is debatable, and can be amended by modifying the committee, or by instructions to them.

(8) *The motion to postpone to a fixed time*. This is intended to gain time for more light upon the question, or to secure some other desired end, yet insure ultimate consideration at a fixed date. This is debatable, and amendable by altering the proposed date.

(9) *The motion to postpone indefinitely*. The object of this is to secure the indirect rejection of a proposition, by throwing it out of further consideration without committing the body by direct vote against it. It cannot be amended, but it opens to debate the whole subject which it covers. If the Previous Question be ordered with regard to this it would only affect it, but not the main question lying behind it which it is sought to postpone.

4. AMENDMENTS. Any proposition to modify a motion which is under discussion, by adding, striking out, or substituting, so as to bring its tenor more nearly into harmony with the views of the body is in order, except, as specified, in the case of certain privileged questions, whose nature does not allow it. So is an amendment to an amendment. But there, by common consent, the direct right to amend ceases; since an amendment to an amendment to an amendment would tend to confusion. The same end can be reached, however, in some other way, as by voting down the first proposed amendment to the amendment, and then substituting the new proposition as a new amendment to the amendment. In such a case there is no objection to the giving of notice that in case opportunity be afforded by the defeat of the existing amendment to the amendment, another [described] will be substituted in its place, thus enabling all to vote intelligently.

Of course an amendment requires to be seconded, like any

other motion, before it can be considered. Usually, however, where the mover and seconder of the original motion accept an amendment—and no objection be made—the amendment is quietly incorporated in the original motion without the trouble of a special vote upon it.

An amendment is not infrequently hostile in its intent to the proposition to which it is to be applied, but does not thereby become invalid.

In putting the question on an amendment, the Moderator should be precise in his language. He should first state the proposition in its unamended form; then the nature of the proposed modification, by striking out, adding, or substituting certain words; and then explain the purport of the change, so that the dullest member of the body may not fail to comprehend the exact nature of the question as to which his judgment is asked.

**5. RECONSIDERATION.** As new light is always liable to shine upon old questions, it is now well settled that a vote once passed may be reconsidered, provided due care be taken so to order it as not to unsettle needlessly the stability of legislation. Where no special rule regulates the matter, a motion to reconsider a vote once passed may be made and acted upon in the same way as any other motion. It is common in legislative bodies, however, to require that such a motion be made within some limit of time, and by some person who voted in favor of the proposition it is sought to reconsider. The form of question is: "Shall the vote of [date] by which it was ordered [specify] be reconsidered?" The effect of the passage of this is not *to reverse* the vote to which it applies, but to *annul its adoption*, and bring the original question again before the body for discussion in exactly the same condition in which it was before the vote of adoption (now reversed) was taken.

**6. COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE.** It is often convenient, when an assembly is ill-informed as to a subject, and the whole matter lies crudely before it, that it should be able to go over it and discuss all its aspects with an informality and freedom like that common in an ordinary committee. It is then usual to refer the business to "the Committee of the Whole." The form of vote is: "Shall this body now go into Committee of the Whole to consider [specify]?" That motion being passed, the Moderator would call some other member to the chair, and the assembly, with no more

restraint from the rules of order than would prevail in an ordinary committee, would then discuss the subject-matter until some conclusion be reached, when the Committee would rise, the Moderator resume the chair, the person who had been acting as chairman in committee would formally report the result to the assembly, which could then act upon it as upon the report of any committee.

**7. INFORMAL CONSIDERATION OF A QUESTION.** It is one of the improvements of the modern processes of deliberative bodies, that when it is desired to debate a matter for a time tentatively, and without being held to the strictness of parliamentary rules, yet without the formality and trouble of going into Committee of the Whole, the custom has grown up of *considering the question informally*, and, when as the result it has become clear what action will be wise, afterward to consider it *formally*. This, for substance, has long been the practice of Ecclesiastical Councils when, after having closed their public hearings, they are "by themselves" feeling their way toward their Result. The Clerk during such informal procedure should keep a memorandum of what is done, but it should not be a part of the minutes.

When such informal action is complete the Moderator will announce that "acting informally the body has had [so and so] under consideration, and has reached certain conclusions, which he will state." The body can then proceed to act upon this as upon the report of any committee.

**8. QUESTIONS OF ORDER.** If a body—as all churches ought to have—have special rules of order, it is one business of the Moderator to enforce them. If there be none, then all falls back upon the common laws which govern all deliberative bodies. If a member interrupt another while speaking; if he introduce a motion which is out of order; if he insist on debating an undebatable question; if he travel out of the normal range of debate into matters which have no connection therewith; if he make personal attacks upon individuals; the Moderator ought at once to call him to order and insist upon his obedience. Should the question be raised *what is in order*, it is the Moderator's business to decide that question at once, and proceed to enforce his decision. Should any member believe that decision to be wrong, however, he can take appeal to the judgment of the body, and, if the appeal be seconded, the Moderator must (1) clearly restate his decision; (2) state

the fact of the appeal now made, and the bearing of it upon the matter before the meeting; (3) if he please, without leaving the chair, state the reasons of his conclusion, and after all have spoken who desire to do so, then (4) put the question, thus: "Shall the decision of the chair stand as the judgment of this body?"

Whenever any member discerns what he thinks to be an offense against the rules of order, it is his right to call attention to the same. He may rise and say: "Mr. Moderator, I rise to a point of order," or, "I call the member to order." It then becomes the duty of the Moderator to direct the attention of the body immediately to the point of order raised and to decide the same — subject, of course, to an appeal to the assembly. When a speaker has been thus ruled to be guilty of a breach of order, he cannot continue his speech, should objection be made, without a permissive vote of the assembly.

**9. COMMITTEES.** To avoid the possibility of the neutrality of equal division, committees should be composed of an odd number, like three, five, or seven. If small, they are usually nominated by the chair, subject to the approval of the body. When a course of action has been determined on, and the object of a committee is to carry out measures already fixed, it should be few in number and wholly composed of the warm friends of the proposed action. But when the intent in referring the matter is to gain additional light, or to investigate more widely with a view to harmonize a conflict of judgment, the committee should be larger and should carefully include intelligent representatives of all shades of opinion. The first-named member of a committee is its chairman, and is charged with the responsibility of calling it together. Should he, for any reason, fail to do so, any two members can lawfully assemble them. A committee, like the body of which it is a microcosm, can act only when a quorum of its members is present. Usually the chairman reports its action for the committee. Such report usually begins: "Your committee appointed [so and so] beg leave to say that they have attended to the duty assigned them, and make the following report," etc.; and concludes: "All of which is respectfully submitted by" [all the names]. Should the committee fail of unity, and a minority dissent, a secondary report can be made, which would begin: "The undersigned, a minority of the committee appointed [so and so] beg leave," etc.

Such a minority report can be read as a matter of right. But the only way in which it can be acted upon is for some one to move to substitute it for the report of the majority, which would bring both before the body. The rendering by a special committee of its completed report and its acceptance by the body, of itself discharges that committee; yet an order to recommit would revive the committee without special vote.

**10. REPORTS.** When a committee has presented its report, a vote to "accept" that report simply takes it into the custody of the body, placing it upon its table where it can be at any time called up for further action, and discharges the committee. Such further action may be to recommit [to the same, to an enlarged, or to an entirely new committee], to adopt, or to postpone indefinitely or reject altogether. Its *adoption* adopts its conclusions as the conclusions of the body, although, where it culminates in a series of resolutions, it is better that they be specifically voted on.

**11. THE OBJECTION TO A QUESTION.** There is a process sometimes resorted to in the English Parliament, and in Congress, which it would be well to naturalize in Congregational assemblies. It is that by which it is instantly in the power of two-thirds of the body to say that a given question shall not be brought before it. It takes the form of Objecting to that Question. The objection must be made, however, when the matter is first introduced, and the motion cannot be amended, or debated. In assemblies so liable as many Congregational bodies necessarily are to the presence of one or more members whose sense of the special importance of some favorite doctrine or duty wholly overbalances and overpowers all general conception of the symmetry of truth and of the proportions which ought to be maintained with regard to it, this provision becomes in some cases only reasonably self-protective. It is entirely suitable, and in no sense an invasion of the rights of any individual, or individuals, that two-thirds of a church, or a conference, or a council, assembled for some special other purpose and with little time in which to do its work, shall, on motion of any, have the power firmly at once to "choke off" any brother whose zeal outruns discretion so far as to impel him to endeavor to lead them off into the discussion of anti-tobacco, or anti-masonry, or any other thing which, however good in itself, as thus introduced fulfills that dense description of dirt—"matter out of place."

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